

**United States Foreign Assistance
Oral History Program**

Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection

An Interview with

Marcia Bernbaum

1999

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Arlington, Virginia

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ASSOCIATION FOR DIPLOMATIC STUDIES AND TRAINING ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, was established in 1986 to enhance the training of foreign affairs personnel and to instill in the public a greater appreciation for our diplomatic history.

The Association's Foreign Affairs Oral History Program was established in 1988 and is housed in the Lauinger Library of Georgetown University and at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, VA. The collection is comprised of oral histories taken from a number of projects, with the unifying factor that all concern the conduct of American foreign affairs and experiences of those employed in the field of diplomacy and consular affairs and their families.

The oral history collection includes interviews done under the auspices of the Foreign Service History Center of George Washington University, which was amalgamated into the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program, the Foreign Service Family Project, the Women Ambassadors' Project, the United States Information Agency Alumni Association Project, the Foreign Assistance (AID) Oral History Project, the Senior Officers' Project, the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project and others.

The aim of the US Foreign Assistance Oral History Program, in particular, is to develop a collection of oral histories of those who have served USAID and predecessor agencies and those who have served in foreign assistance programs of associated organizations such as private firms, private voluntary organizations, and other US government agencies. The Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) of the USAID has made a grant to help finance the preparation of 120 oral histories.

For the most part these interviews are carried out by retired USAID personnel on a volunteer basis, directed by the Oral History Program. The interviews are unclassified, and unless so marked are available for use by researchers. Most of these interviews have been transcribed and then returned to the person interviewed for editing. The transcript is an edited version, and is not a word for word rendition of the cassette tape. The editing usually consists of correcting of names and dates that have been missed during an interview. The individual interviewed may also choose to expand upon topics that may not have been developed in the time allotted for the interview.

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KEY WORDS

MARCIA BERNBAUM

Business executive education
Caribbean Basin Initiative
Center For Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE)
Central America
Columbia
Community organization
Cuba
Development Studies Program
Ecuador
Education programs
El Salvador
Employment programs
Evaluation
Guatemala
Haiti
Head Start Program
Honduras
International Development Intern program
Kenya
Kissinger Commission
Latin America Scholarship Program
Nicaragua
Nongovernment organizations (NGOS)
Panama
Participant Training
Peru
President Clinton
President Reagan
Primary education
Private sector development
Program Management
 R4s (Results Review/ Resources Request)*
Reduction in Force (RIF)
Regional Office for Central America Programs (ROCAP)
Sandinistas
Strategic planning
The Caribbean

USAID Training
Work Force Development

*USAID programming system

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An interview with
Marcia Bernbaum

Interviewed by: W. Haven North
Initial interview date: April 21, 1999

Q: Marcia, why don't you lead off with a very brief, thumbnail sketch of your association with AID and Foreign Assistance and then we'll go into it in more depth.

Overview of career

BERNBAUM: Okay. My association with AID and Foreign Assistance began when I was a daughter of a Foreign Service officer in Ecuador in the early 60s when my father was the U.S. ambassador. Ecuador had an AID program that I was peripherally aware of. My father was rather critical of the program. He felt that AID employees were overqualified, overpaid, and not involved in work that was very relevant.

My direct association with AID came by chance through my affiliation with my husband who began working with AID as a contractor in Honduras in 1973 and then came on board as a Direct Hire in 1976.

Early years and education

Q: Let's go back to the beginning. Where you were born, where you grew up, your early years, your education and, in that, as you already eluded to, what got you interested you in international development work?

BERNBAUM: As I said, my father was a career Foreign Service Officer with the State Department. I was conceived in Managua, Nicaragua and born in Quito, Ecuador in 1948. My parents had just arrived and their household effects had not yet come so my brother's crib, which was to be mine, hadn't arrived. My first home was a suitcase. I think I can justifiably say I've lived out of a suitcase ever since.

I lived in Ecuador twice, as a baby, and then again as a teenager. I also lived in Venezuela twice. I did kindergarten and first grade in a Catholic convent school in Caracas where I learned to read and write in Spanish. We returned to Venezuela in 1965 when my father was named U.S. ambassador to Venezuela. By that time I was in college and came for vacations. I also lived in Argentina from 1959 to 1961.

In 1969 when I graduated from college, my father retired from the Foreign Service. I had no plans to go

back overseas. I was starting graduate school in the Fall of 1970 when I, by chance, met a former Peace Corps volunteer who had just come back from Honduras. We married in 1971, and in 1973 we moved to Honduras where he was a contractor with AID.

Q: Let's go back. Where did you go to college?

BERNBAUM: I went to Sweetbriar College near Lynchburg, Virginia from '65 to '69 where I majored in biology and minored in psychology. The year after that I studied Montessori. I was quite interested in preschool education but decided not to pursue a Montessori career. Instead I went to graduate school where I got my doctorate in developmental psychology. I began my graduate studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champagne in a program called Human Development and loved it. However, by this time I had met Eric. There were no jobs for him in Urbana Champagne, so I moved back to Washington and completed my doctorate at George Washington University.

Q: What was your doctorate in?

BERNBAUM: Cognitive developmental psychology. That was one of the disjuncts in my life. I went to graduate school to learn about children. Instead I learned how to carry out very theoretical research on children, which was frustrating.

So back to where I was. In 1973 when my husband, Eric Zallman, went back to Honduras as a contractor with AID, I arranged to do my dissertation in Honduras. I worked in the poor land invasions in Tegucigalpa. My dissertation topic was very esoteric. I hardly remember it. However, what I got out of my dissertation was exposure, that I had never had as a Foreign Service child, to the lives of people who were in dire straits. I spent my time in communities where many houses were made of cardboard boxes. There was no water, no electricity, no latrines. I would often have to walk through feces to get to the homes. I interviewed children and adults who had been to school as well as those who hadn't. Three or four times while I was collecting the data for my dissertation, I had to stop what I was doing and take a child dying of third degree malnutrition to the Maternal Child Hospital in Tegucigalpa.

The Maternal Child Hospital had the only ward in the whole country for severely malnourished kids, and they only had 30 spaces. This was my first exposure to what it is like when you are really down and out. In Tegucigalpa alone, there are many more than 30 highly malnourished children. The only way to get into this ward was through contacts. You had to know a General or somebody of that stature. In this case, I was the crazy Gringa who raised a raucous to get malnourished kids into the ward. That was quite an eye opener.

Q: How were you received by the community interviewing people in that kind of situation?

BERNBAUM: I had no problems going into the communities. I would establish contact with the head of Patronato, the local community organization. He would accompany me to the houses to do the interviews or assign someone to accompany me.

In terms of formative experiences, this was the experience that probably best prepared me for a career in AID. In 1974 I finished my dissertation. I knew that my husband was going to be staying in Honduras. I didn't expect that I would be able to get a paying job. We didn't need the money. Eric's salary as a contractor was fine. So I volunteered my services and worked with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education at that time did not have an applied research and evaluation capability. I had completed my doctorate with lots of fancy book learning as well as knowledge of theoretical research methodologies. But I was left wondering if I had anything useful to offer to humanity. I decided this was my opportunity to see if I could take all this theoretical stuff and use it in some way to help teachers and children.

For two years I worked as a volunteer with the Director General of Primary Education, Rafael Pineda Ponce, helping him to establish an applied research and evaluation capability. I affiliated myself with a preschool program that was located in one of the communities where I collected data for my dissertation. It was called the Colonia Tres de Mayo. I was assigned a couple of teachers who I was to work with and train. There was no space at the Ministry so we worked out of my house. What was particularly exciting about the experience was that I was able to put my research skills to use to do applied research that resulted in some products that were of direct use to teachers.

Q: What kind of products are you talking about?

BERNBAUM: Well, one had to do with the image that teachers have of children. This was one of the most creative pieces of work I have ever done, and the rationale for my doing it underlies the philosophy that brought me into AID. Many teachers working in low-income communities come in with a predisposition to believe that children who are very poor and who come to school barefoot, dirty, with a distended belly, and dirty are, by definition, dumb. This, then, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. What I did was to go to 20 first grade teachers working in low income schools near the land invasions and ask them, "In what conditions would you like to receive a child coming into first grade? What are the basic things they should know?"

As a result, we came up with a list of about 20 skills that teachers wanted kids to come to first grade with (including, for example, knowing their colors, being able to count to ten). The other person I worked with selected 20 kids in a preschool in the Colonia Tres de Mayo where I had done my field work for my dissertation. We each took 10 and spent the day as participant observers following what each child did from the time he/she got up until the time he/she went to bed. We identified during the course of each child's normal day how they spontaneously displayed these 20 skills outside of the school setting — be it going to the "pulperia" (neighborhood corner store) where they could count their money in order to pay for items; be able to distinguish items they were purchasing by their color, size, etc.

So at the end of this experience, we designed two skills tests. For one, we took them to the local school and stuck them behind a desk with a paper and pencil. We asked them to perform these 20 skills and they failed miserably. They had never used pencils in their lives. They didn't know what a triangle and a circle was. But then, for the second test, we took each of the kids on a prearranged "walk." The walk was deliberately staged to give each child a chance to show the skills as they spontaneously use them in their daily lives. For

example, we took each child to the local “pulperia.” We had it set up in advance with the owner so he was prepared for our visit. One we arrived we asked the child how many candies they wanted. They had to count them out. They had to pick balloons by their colors. We were building, at this point, a preschool in the community and, at the time of the test, the workers were putting on the roof. We buried in the rubble they used for the scaffolding bits and pieces of wood of different geometric shapes. We asked each child to identify each shape, which they could do but not using the formal geometric terms. Lo and behold, the kids did extraordinarily well when they were tested in their natural environment!

With the data we obtained we, then, prepared a little booklet for teachers called *What Can We Learn From Our Children and their Environment?* We prepared composites of the kids we had observed. The little girl was called Maria, and the little boy, Francisco. The booklet opened tracking a day in Maria’s life and a day in Francisco’s life. Where they spontaneously showed a desired skill for entry into first grade we put a footnote which spelled out what that skills was. The sections that followed were designed to show teachers how they could take advantage of the positive aspects of their student’s daily lives that they bring with them to school and capitalize on these positive aspects in the teaching-learning process. The underlying message was, “Look at the positive and not the negative.” Instead of saying, “You are an idiot, you don’t know how to hold a pencil,” start off with, “I know that you can draw with a stick in the sand. Well, this is how you do it when you use a pencil.”

The second project was a competition among low-income schools in Tegucigalpa in which we had older children write and illustrate books for younger children. Having been through the Montessori training I had come to see that older children are often the best teachers of younger children. We started off by visiting sixth grade classes where we asked the students to prepare stories for younger children in kindergarten and first grade remembering back to what it was like when they were that age or thinking of their little brothers and sisters. We gave them themes that had to guide the stories — colors, numbers, geometric forms, aspects of nature. We got about 500 stories. From the 500 stories we selected 20 and gave them to kindergarten and first grade teachers in the same low income areas to read to the students. Collectively, these teachers and their students selected what they considered to be the five best stories. We then we went back to the authors and had them illustrate their stories. We, then, took a couple of the stories and prepared a manual showing teachers how they could use these stories to introduce a host of subjects in their classrooms. All five children received a special prize at a ceremony hosted by the Director General of Primary Education. One of the winners turned out to be Tony Cauterucci Jr., the son of the head of AID’s Human Resources Development Office (we decided not to discriminate against the rich kids so at the last minute we included 6th graders from the American School, a private school for well to do Honduran and international students. Tony Jr. was then 12 years old. He is now in his late 30s, and remembers this as one of the highlights of his life).

These were very creative times for me, personally. And I was able to persuade myself that with my fancy book learning I could be of use to humanity.

Two themes predominate in my early work. Both have been significant factors in my subsequent work with

AID. One is the importance of emphasizing the positive — what kids have to offer, not what they don't have to offer. The other is the importance of affiliating oneself with talented, creative counterparts and letting them take the lead.

During these two years I had the good fortune of affiliating myself with an extraordinary gentleman. Rafael Pineda Ponce was the Director General of Primary Education, a humble campesino, a visionary who had come up through the ranks and is now, 25 years later, the President of the Honduran Senate. Professor Pineda Ponce had me working, a volunteer, and others working for him willing to walk off the end of the earth to help him accomplish his vision. He was a real mentor and somebody who I continue to admire. It is, in part, with the idea of working with the Rafael Pineda Ponces of the world that I decided to join AID.

Q: Good. That's very interesting background — an extraordinary experience. Well, in what years was this?

BERNBAUM: This was from '74 to '76. Then in '76 to my dismay, my husband received a direct hire offer from AID, and he took me kicking and screaming back to the United States. I loved what I was doing. I felt I was making a difference and, more importantly, learning a great deal. We reached an agreement that I would look for a job in Washington that would give me great career satisfaction and, if I found one, Eric would begrudgingly either leave AID or convert to Civil Service because as Foreign Service he would have to go out to the field.

Eric agreed to get his resume together. I agreed, while I looked for a job, to submit an application for an internship at AID. The long and the short of it is that I got a job with Head Start doing nationwide impact evaluations. While fine for a year, it was not what I wanted to dedicate my career to. Eric never put together his resume and, in 1977, I was accepted to AID's internship program.

Q: Why was the Head Start program not satisfying?

BERNBAUM: We were operating at a very esoteric level. We were designing nationwide impact evaluations of Head Start. At that time — 1976-77 — we were designing evaluations of between \$200,000 and \$2,000,000. That was big bucks then. I remember saying, "Fine, so who is the audience for this evaluation?" (I was assigned to develop an RFP for an evaluation of a bilingual-bicultural program). The response: "Congress. We have to persuade Congress why it was a good idea to finance the Head Start program."

My response, "That's great. I'll go up to the Hill and talk to some of the Congressman and see what they want."

The response: "You can't do that".

My reaction: How am I going to be able to figure out what they are interested in?"

The response: “That’s your problem. You need to figure it out.”

That was my first contact with the reality of how so many evaluations are done, even in AID, without a sense of the audience as an interested party. So it’s no surprise that these multi-hundred thousand or million dollar evaluations end up in bookshelves or trash baskets. As a tax paying citizen, I find this very frustrating. If you are going to put money into an evaluation, start with your audiences and make sure that you are collecting information they want.

So in ’77, I was interviewed for AID’s internship program.

Joined USAID as an IDI - 1977

Q: An IDI?

BERNBAUM: Yes. I went in as a psychologist, but the Agency didn’t know quite what to do with me. So they made me into a Human Resources Development Officer. I remember when I was interviewed by a committee of three or four AID employees, I was asked, “Why is that you want to join AID?”

My response: “I am committed to helping people realize their potential.”

I added, “You know, I worked with an extraordinary gentleman in Honduras, Rafael Pineda Ponce, the Director General of Primary Education. This guy had a vision. What I would like to do is be able to help people like Pineda Ponce realize their visions and implement their programs.”

I remember laughter around the room and people saying, “Good luck, you are not going to find many of these people.”

I was accepted in AID in the Spring of 1977, and I started in November of that year.

Q: Did you get any orientation or preparation?

BERNBAUM: Yes, I had an orientation, but we all got off to a bad start. In those days they were accepting 50 interns in the fall and 50 in the spring, and they divided us into two groups each fall and spring. I had the choice of entering either the October or November group. My boss at Head Start asked me to delay and join in November instead of October. I quit my job on the 25th of October. I was supposed to start November 11. I’ll never forget, on October 31st, I was taking a nap and I got a Halloween trick or treat gift. A lady from personnel woke me out of my nap to tell me they were very sorry, but due to budget cuts in AID, they were not going to be able to accept me. They were only going to be able to accept four economists because that was the priority. All the rest of us were on our own. By this time, there were people traveling across the United States who had sold their houses. The first thing each of us wanted to know was, who else was also affected? The response was that the Privacy Act prohibited them from telling us. The

woman who ran the intern program, come back to me and said on the QT, “Don’t tell anybody but my advice is go to your Congressman.”

So through my father, I did exactly that and so did most of the other would be interns who suddenly found themselves out of a job. We got results. Within a few days, a staffer on the Foreign Relations Committee came to visit the head of the intern program. He said, “I just happened to be in the neighborhood, and I’m dropping by to see how the intern program is going. You know we people on the Hill really love it. You are, of course bringing 50 new interns in this fall?” When she responded that this was not in the cards, he feigned outrage and went back to the Hill to submit a report.

On November 10th, the day before we were supposed to start, we all got calls inviting us to join AID. As I recall, we reported to work on my birthday, November 21st. We were about the most disgruntled, difficult class that you’d ever want to deal with.

That was my first taste of the Hill. There I felt, unlike in future years, that the Hill was a very positive influence.

Q: Did they give you any orientation after that?

BERNBAUM: Yes. I had a very good orientation. It lasted about 10 weeks. The last two weeks were spent off site. We went to the coal mining area in West Virginia to design projects and then have them reviewed back in AID/Washington. That was a very good experience.

In April of ’78 I then moved into my first rotation in the Latin America Bureau. I worked in the Education Office for about three or four months. I was very nervous. But the people I worked with — Ken Martin and Charlotte Jones — were very supportive. They spent a lot of time mentoring me. This is a theme I will raise throughout this interview, as the mentoring I’ve received in AID has been outstanding.

Through this rotation I got my first sense of the Latin American Bureau. Those were the days of very vigorous program reviews.

Q: The Education unit was in...

BERNBAUM: ...the Development Resources Office which had project development officers and technical people like myself. While in Washington I also did a rotation to what is now the Global Bureau. It was a good experience. I learned a lot.

During the period I was in the Latin American Bureau, I had a very amusing experience. Donor Lion, the Mission Director from Jamaica brought a Project Identification Document (PID) to Washington for review. I was the technical person who was assigned to critique it. It was a very poorly put together. The Project Development Officer was Stacy Rhodes, who is now Mission Director in South Africa. The Economist was

Janet Ballantyne, who up until recently was Mission Director in Russia. Like me, they had both just joined the agency. The three of us tore into the document. It turned out that the person who wrote it knew what he was talking about but didn't know the AID format. I was the one who put together the issues paper. It was my first major accomplishment. Donor Lion walked into the review. He's such a slick guy. Rather than defending himself, because he knew he had no defense, he started off the review by saying, "Marcia, I accept every one of your criticisms. Now, would you like to help us rewrite the paper?"

So, I learned my lesson.

Q: What was your impression of AID at that time or your first impression? Do you remember? Was it anything in particular?

BERNBAUM: Very male dominated, a bit macho, but good, very good. I'd heard very good things from Eric. He had had very positive experiences. I was very impressed with the caliber of the people I worked with. It was clear that the people I was working with were deeply committed to development.

Q: Well, then after that three month experience...?

First USAID assignment in Panama - 1978-1980

BERNBAUM: Eric and I went to Panama for our first assignment. We left our daughter in Washington and spent a month driving down to Panama. We went through Nicaragua right before the revolution. That was a tense period. I was in Panama as an intern from August of '78 to June of '80 where I was one of two Human Resources Development Officers. I reconnected with Tony Cauterucci who had been transferred in the interim to Panama as Human Resources Development Officer. I did a number of rotations and the...

Q: What does that mean?

BERNBAUM: Rotations as an intern. While I spent most of my time as the Human Resources Development Officer, during my first year in Panama I rotated for three or four weeks to the Controller's office, another three or four weeks to the Program office, and two weeks to the Projects office.

A highlight of this period was that I adopted Tony Cauterucci as my first real mentor. Tony's management style in that office impressed me and a lot of my management style since has been patterned on watching what he did. Tony cared deeply about his staff, and you could see this in the way the office was run. He and others cared about my career development. That was very, very clear.

That was the positive side. The frustrating side was that it was not easy to work with the Panamanians. Also living in Panama was too much like living in the United States. We had the Canal Zone, which had all the conveniences. It was very difficult to do program design.

There were, however, some positive points. My assignment was to design a Work Force Development project. The problem was a high rate of unemployment. The response: skills training. I went to Tony and said, "I'm a preschool specialist. I don't know anything about work force development."

His response, "Welcome to AID. You don't have to be an expert in these things. Your task is to manage technical experts who are the experts."

It didn't take us long to figure out that, if the problem was unemployment, the solution was not training. It was finding them jobs.

I went back to Tony and said, "I know nothing about job generation."
His response: "Keep at it."

And then, of course, the next step was, if the task is to generate jobs, what really needs to be done is to stimulate the economy. So here I was, a Ph.D. with a Doctorate in Developmental Psychology and background in preschool education, examining macro economic issues!

We eventually decided that the conditions were not right for a Work Force Development Project. While not a very satisfying or career enhancing thing to do, I prepared a long memo to Tony explaining why we shouldn't do this project. Tony was very supportive. When he wrote my personnel evaluation, he lauded me for the courage of having made a decision like this, which is not one that is usually rewarded in AID.

Ironically enough, I had just finished my internship during which I had been promoted two years in a row. Several months later, when I was at my next post, the Mission Director and I were in Washington for a project review. The Director of the Development Resources Office, Buster Brown, was going around congratulating people on their promotions. He walked by me and congratulated me on my promotion. I said, "But Buster, I'm not eligible. I haven't been in grade for less than a year." I think the agency messed up. But if I got promoted so quickly, within 10 months, it has to have been on the basis of that evaluation. It speaks well for Tony and the Promotion Board that I got credit for having buried a project before it was born.

Q: That must have been a very intensive analysis.

BERNBAUM: It was. But the message that I would like to get across is that the system showed that it had integrity. What I did instead was to design a program to support small business development working through the Panamanian private sector. I began by researching USAID's past experience with training businessmen. With that information I approached a prestigious Panamanian management training institution called APEDE and asked if they would be interested in collaborating with USAID in designing a program to support small business development.

It was a fascinating experience and one that bore fruit. I was able to search through USAID's memory base

and identify several successful management training programs that AID sponsored in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I also found out that AID/Panama, in the late 1960s, had supported APEDE with a seed grant to help get it established. Not only did this help me design the project, but it confirmed for me the importance of having an Agency such as AID keep a good historical record.

Q: What was the project?

BERNBAUM: It was small business development...

Q: ...did that result in employment then?

BERNBAUM: I believe so but cannot be sure as I left Panama right after designing it and was not able to keep track of it.

Because I basically killed the larger project I effectively worked myself out of a job in Panama. Eric and I were advised that, at the end of our first two year tour, we would have to look for another post.

Q: When you killed the project you were saying the economic environment was not right for a project like that? Was that the basic point?

BERNBAUM: Yes.

Q: How did you find working in Panama though?

BERNBAUM: I found working in Panama the least satisfying of any of the countries that I've been in. The Panamanians, at that point, weren't particularly interested in our assistance. They were a pretty sophisticated crowd, and Panama, in comparison with other countries in the region, was not poor. One of my assignments as an intern, while on rotation in the Program Office, was to work on AID/Panama's Country Strategic Plan. I can't tell you how we I had to struggle to come up with data showing that Panama was very poor. When the document went to Washington for review, I'm told that people laughed when we provided statistics on how many houses had latrines versus bathrooms. In most countries we work in, to simply have a latrine is a big deal!

In the meantime, the Latin America Bureau started courting us for other positions. Buster Brown, by then the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the LAC Bureau had decided we should go to El Salvador. This was in late '79. My younger daughter Leah was born in Panama at about that time. I said to my husband, "Tell Buster there's a war in El Salvador, and we have small child and a little baby."

The response was "Don't worry. The war will be over very soon."

Transferred to Nicaragua - 1980

We were not convinced and persuaded Buster to change our assignment. We were then assigned to Nicaragua. We actually really wanted to go to Ecuador to work with John Sanbraillo. I would have done anything to go back to my country of birth. But Buster said, "Ecuador has a small program. Nicaragua is going to be our show piece. The Sandinistas have just come to power and we're putting in 75 million dollars in Economic Support Funds (ESF)." This was the first big ESF allotment outside of Israel and Egypt. So we left in June of '80 with a four year old and a six month old and arrived in Nicaragua in August.

I'll never forget. We were in Berkeley visiting my brother and sister-in-law. The night before leaving for Managua we were watching the evening news. There was a guy on the news who was campaigning for the presidency. His name was Ronald Reagan. He said on this interview, "When I become President of the United States, I will cease all assistance to Nicaragua."

I turned to Eric and said, "Do you think we are going to the right country?"

When we arrived a day later everybody was on a high — the ambassador, the Mission Director, my husband. I was neutral. They were very excited about supporting the revolution. But by November when Reagan was elected as President, the Carter Administration had concluded that the Sandinistas were not Nicaragua's hope for the future.

At the time, I was working on the redesign of a loan that had been approved under the Somoza regime and put on hold. When Reagan was inaugurated as President in January, '81 he made good on his campaign promise. Three days after his inauguration, we were advised that the AID mission was to be cut in half. We simply rolled over the border to Honduras.

I would like to raise a point before we go on, and it has to do with values. The prior November, I went to Washington with the Mission Director, Larry Harrison. We had redesigned the education project and, in the course of the design, were faced with issues of commingling funds with the Soviets.

Q: Commingling means what?

BERNBAUM: AID was prohibited by law to invest funds in a program that also had Soviet or Cuban funds going into it. In this case, we were dealing with thousands of Cubans flooding into the Nicaraguan education system, as advisors and teachers. One of the things the Sandinistas wanted us to do under the redesigned project was to build schools. However, there was the risk that some of these schools would have Cuban teachers. To address this potential problem, we met with the Minister of Education. Larry said, "We need your solemn promise that you will not put any Cuban teachers in schools built with AID funds." He said he could do that.

Another Sandinista request didn't work. The Ministry of Education, under the redesign, had asked AID to help design and finance an audiovisual center which would have the capability to print texts and other

materials. Yet the Sandinistas were, at the time, publishing literacy manuals that opened on the first page with a diatribe against the Yankee Imperialists and the Bourgeois. Larry went to the Minister of Education and said, “Mr. Minister, this just will not do. Our U.S. Congress will not agree to financing a printing press that publishes material that is critical of the United States. I need your promise that you will not publish anything on AID-funded printing presses that are critical of the U.S.”

The Minister of Education said he could not promise this would not happen, so we agreed not to support the Sandinista government’s request for an audiovisual center.

When we took the redesigned project to Washington, we knew that some elements were well designed and others were very iffy. The political situation made it such that there were a number of aspects we had no control over. I remember on the way up saying to the Mission Director, “Larry, what are we going to say when they raise some issues that are very legitimate?”

He said, “We’ll be honest. Tell them the truth.” He knew that AID/Washington was going to approve the project because of the political nature of the program.

I remember going into the review. The Mission Director turned to me and let me take the lead as the technical person, even though I was an intern. Buster Brown was chairing the review. And the issues were fired at us. Some of them I could handle fine. However, in a number of instances my response was that the issues were on target but that we couldn’t answer them. These were things we were going to have to look at in project implementation.

Buster Brown, who had a reputation for being very tough when he chaired reviews, turned to the two of us and said, “You know, Larry and Marcia, I have to congratulate you. This is the first time in a long time I’ve seen such an honest review.” Another confirmation that the values I held near and dear and continue to hold near and dear — honesty and integrity—were being rewarded by the system

Q: Did he approve the redesign?

BERNBAUM: He did. It was approved in November. However, due to the overall political situation, it was put on hold in December.

Q: What was it supposed to do?

BERNBAUM. It had several components. Limited school construction at the primary level, construction and equipping an agricultural university, support for vocational training. As I recall, due to our own limitations with commingling, there was more bricks and mortar than we would have wanted.

Q: Do you remember any of the issues for example?

BERNBAUM: Goodness, I don't remember the issues. That was a long time ago. Sorry.

Q: What was your impression of the Sandinistas?

BERNBAUM: It was a fascinating experience. I felt like I was in a cartoon, horror thriller eating popcorn and peanuts as a participant observer. The Minister of Education, Dr. Carlos Tunnerman, was a highly respected educator within and outside of Nicaragua. His Vice Minister was a Marxist who would have nothing do with AID or with me. I never met him. The person who was assigned to be our counterpart was the Head of Planning, Juan Batista Arrien. He had been the Rector of the Catholic University before joining the Sandinista government, and he is now is back there — a fiery Spaniard and a former priest. When I wasn't in meetings with him, he had the Cuban advisors meeting with him. I have several memories of going down to meet with him and seeing the Cuban advisors scurry out of his office. A couple of times I tried to get them to talk to me. They refused.

The Sandinistas had a long range vision. For them a revolution is a generational event. It begins with children, preferably of preschool age. Those are the hearts and minds you are going to be able to change. The first thing they did was literally to go to the parks throughout the country and fix up the swings and slides. They introduced cartoon programs in the afternoon on television. They immediately started rewriting the texts. They were excellent in the whole area of mass social marketing — very effective. I had to hand it to them. While I admired their effectiveness, I disagreed entirely with their messages. When the first set of revised texts came out, sure enough, one found in social studies and other subjects the predictable diatribe against the Yankee Imperialists and the Bourgeois.

I remember watching cartoon programs with my kids in the afternoon. Suddenly the cartoon would stop, and you would see what would be like an advertisement. In it you would see a flash of U.S. Marines coming on shore shooting people and raping women. This is what the three and four year olds were exposed to.

Q: When they cut the USAID mission, did you lose your job?

Moved to USAID/Honduras - 1981

BERNBAUM: Actually, we were allowed to stay on, but we decided it was time to leave. We had two small kids, and I was getting nervous. Things up until then had been fine. The Sandinistas were very friendly toward us, but the atmosphere was beginning to change. The AID mission in Honduras lured myself, Eric and another AID employee, Gordie Straub, over. So we literally rolled over the border back to Honduras. Eric had worked as a contractor there with AID; I had never having worked with AID there before but now was direct hire. We arrived in Honduras in March of '81 and were there until July of '84.

Q: What was the situation in Honduras?

BERNBAUM: Melgar Castro was the President. He had been freely elected. Honduras is a very poor

country. It was a backwater AID program at the point when we went and had a very small amount of funding. During the period we were there, the funding started going up dramatically. Eric went in as the Deputy in the Projects Office. I was a fledgling Assistant Education Development Officer working in the Human Resources Development Office.

Q: Was there any issue of dual employment? That used to be a real issue.

BERNBAUM: At about the time that Eric and I came in, AID had just issued a policy that favored tandem assignments. Other couples had experienced difficulties up until that point, but Eric and I came in at just the right time. We were fortunate in that the Latin America Bureau had two people who were deeply committed to career enhancement for people they felt were talented — Buster Brown, then Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Latin America Bureau, and Terri Stephen who was in charge of the Latin America Bureau's Executive Office. For our first four posts — Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Washington, we were fine. We didn't bother to look for our next assignments because we knew that the powers that be were taking good care of us. At that point, we were both low enough in the bureaucracy that there were no problems with tandem assignments. And there was flexibility. In the case of Honduras, the AID mission had to come up with a job for me. But, at the time, that was not a problem. There were difficulties later on when we moved up the career ladder.

Q: I see. You've been in education so far. What was the agency's interest in education?

BERNBAUM: At that time AID had education programs in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. The focus was on primary and secondary. In primary education AID was providing support with textbook development, production, and distribution, teacher training, classroom construction...

Q: Well, I'm interested because you were in Honduras during the Reagan administration, right? And my understanding is that in AID, at that time, there was a strong feeling that the U.S. had nothing to offer in this field.

BERNBAUM: Not in Latin America. Wait until I get to my period when I was the Deputy in the Education Division in Washington. We were throwing money at education in Central America like nobody's business.

Q: We'll come back to that.

BERNBAUM: Fine.

Q: In Honduras, what was your position?

BERNBAUM: I was the Assistant Education Development Officer. Let me put this into perspective. As we have learned over the years, if you are going to make a difference — especially working in an area like basic education — you're talking about a long term commitment. In countries like Honduras, Guatemala,

and El Salvador there is a rich history of 20 or 30 plus years involvement in the education sector.

Q: U.S. involvement?

BERNBAUM: Yes, through AID. However, as I understand it, AID is now bowing out of the education business and handing responsibility over to the World Bank and the IDB. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the World Bank and IDB were primarily involved in bricks and mortar. AID was the primary actor when it came to support for the “soft” activities — teacher training, textbooks, Management Information Systems. It wasn’t until the late 80s that the World Bank and IDB started including support for “soft” activities.

But let me go back to the beginnings of AID’s involvement in education in Honduras. Actually it dates back to the ‘60s to the Servicio period...

Q: Was there any recollection of IIAA, the Institute for Inter-American Affairs? It goes back to the ‘40s.

BERNBAUM: Does it? I didn’t know that.

Q: That’s when the Servicio idea started.

BERNBAUM: Okay. I believe that in Honduras AID was involved in helping the Ministry of Education get started. But there was a definite history of AID involvement with smaller programs in education. Just before I arrived in Honduras in 1973 to do my dissertation there had been a major to do. AID was supporting a large secondary school program. It included classroom construction, curriculum development, teacher training, text books, the whole nine yards. A contract was let to a consortium of Florida Universities. It was under a loan. The Florida consortium came in. There was a weak Ministry of Education. The Florida Consortium was under pressure to produce results. On a parallel plane there was a textbook program in Honduras being financed by USAID’s Central America regional program, ROCAP.

Anyway, the Florida Consortium came in and immediately got on the wrong side of the teachers’ union. The teachers union, at that time, was strongly leftist and had tremendous power over the Ministry of Education. The teacher’s union saw the Florida Consortium as a U.S. incursion into their affairs. They also resented that the advisors were loan financed and were getting very large salaries. In an effort both to embarrass the U.S. government and put their own government into difficulties, they went out into the streets and lodged large public protests. They burned the ROCAP texts in a visible place in downtown Tegucigalpa, and they went after the Florida consortium. Eventually the President of Honduras, desiring some political capital, took it upon himself to personally throw the Florida Consortium out of the country.

By the time I arrived in 1973 (this had taken place a year or two before my arrival) the word Florida Consortium had become a bad word. There are some marvelous stories. One is that you could go to the marketplace and witness a woman who had never been to school admonishing her mischievous four year old

that he if he doesn't behave himself she will get the Florida Consortium after him. When I began my volunteer work with the Ministry of Education in '74, the U.S. government and AID, in particular, had a very bad name. AID by that time had dropped out of anything that wasn't construction, finished the construction activity under the secondary education loan, and had stopped working in education because relations were so bad.

Q: Was this the time when the Latin American Bureau was emphasizing major sector loans for education?

BERNBAUM: Yes. In the mid 1970s AID in Washington was sponsoring two education sector analyses, one in El Salvador and one in Ecuador. Shorter sector assessments were also in vogue. In fact, before leaving Honduras for the U.S. in 1976, I was hired by an AID contractor, the Academy for Educational Development, to participate in an education sector assessment focusing on rural primary education.

Q: But you worked for AID.

BERNBAUM: Not at the time. I was a volunteer with the Ministry of Education.

Q: Right. Right.

BERNBAUM: But when I returned in '81, AID had decided to reenter the education sector focusing again on "soft" support. I was put in charge of a small pilot project that focused on curriculum reform. The idea was to adapt for application in Honduras a very successful program that AID had helped start in Columbia called Escuela Nueva. The program, designed initially for use with multi-grade classes in rural areas, permitted children to drop out of school to help their parents with the harvests without penalizing their progress in school.

When I arrived the program was in bad shape. When it was designed there was the anticipation that there would be outside technical assistance from Colombia and other countries. However, a recently appointed Minister of Education put his foot down and said that he would not accept outside technical assistance, not even from other Latin American countries. He appointed to these positions Hondurans who were not qualified for the roles assigned to them.

When I arrived Rafael Pineda Ponce, the Director General of Primary Education who I had worked for in the mid 1970s, had been named Minister of Education. He took up with him as his advisors a number of the people I had worked with while in Honduras in the 1970s. I was thrilled. My dream of supporting people like Pineda Ponce, which I had shared when I was interviewed to join AID, had finally come true.

However, when I arrived in March of 1981 it was a very political year. Pineda Ponce left his position soon after I arrived to go on the campaign trail, and I was left with a program that had become highly politicized being run by technical advisors who lacked the skills to do their jobs.

That was the worst time in my whole career. Given my past history with the Ministry of Education I mistakenly thought that I was still one of them and tried to do everything to advise them on what needed to be done to fix the program. However, they weren't interested. What's more they kept indirectly giving me signals, which I didn't pick up, that I was no longer one of them but an AID officer. It was a very tense relationship. Pineda Ponce left to campaign, and another person came in as interim Minister of Education who I found quite difficult to deal with.

Several months later a letter arrived from the Minister of Education addressed to the USAID Mission Director. I had taken over the Education office while my boss had gone off for home leave and training. The letter said basically "We're looking forward to Marcia's boss coming back. We find her hard to deal with." I was devastated. What I saw as a great opportunity had become a nightmare. I've never been so low and so disillusioned. I was chagrined that I didn't get their indirect messages that I was no longer part of them. I also realized, from an AID perspective, how difficult it is to work with a political Ministry of Education. It was a very sobering experience.

In '81 something happened that turned my stay in Honduras from a very negative to a very positive experience. The Caribbean Basin Initiative was launched, and all of a sudden the focus was on preparing Honduras for an expanded export market to the U.S.. I was looking for something to do. I didn't want to work with the Ministry of Education. I wasn't needed or apparently wanted.

I went to my boss and I said, "I'd like your permission to get together with a group of businessmen to see whether there are any labor productivity issues related to expanding exports to the U.S. and, if so, what AID can do to be helpful. Will you permit me to spend a month or two seeing if there is a role for us?" The response was positive.

Ironically, my husband was working at that time on the demand side while I was working on the supply side.

I approached a very wealthy businessman who ran the largest textile mill in the country and said, "I'd like to organize a group of businessmen as advisors to help guide us."

He said, "I will only become part of your advisory group if you include people from labor and the government."

I said, "Fine."

So he identified some people from the three sectors — the head of the major labor confederation, the person at Ministry of Planning responsible for education, a number of leaders of business organizations in Peru. In May of '82 I hosted an initial meeting at my house. Here I was, a young woman in her early 30s, surrounded by a group of notables in Honduras' public and private sectors. I said to them, "You are all very busy people, but we want to know if there are issues with labor productivity and what we can do to be of

assistance. I realize you are all busy people so I will be happy to come to your offices to talk with you.”

The busiest person in the room, the head of the textile mill that I initially approached, responded: “This is very important. We need to meet with you six times to give you advice.” I’ll never forget his reference to “six times.”

A year and a half later that group had met in my living room at least once a week, every week, and we’d been on an observation tour to the United States. I finally threw them out of my living room to launch on their own, and I say that with great caring because this was the most extraordinary experience I’ve had in my career in AID.

At the beginning none of us knew what we were doing. I came in with no preconceived notions. We started having meetings, talking about what we saw as the issues and potential solutions. The complaint was with INFOP, similar to the institution I tried to work with in Panama, which was financed by a payroll tax. The key complaint was that, as businessmen, they were paying for low quality training that was not meeting their needs.

One day after about three months of weekly meetings, one of the youngest businessmen in the group said, “You know, it just occurred to me. We’ve been sitting here complaining about the government but we’re are part of the problem. If we don’t insist that the government change things, then who are we to complain?”

That, then, led us into organizing an observation tour to the United States to see the role that private businessmen play in supporting education. In the United States for years, vocational high schools have had trained advisory committees — people in electricity or mechanics that come in and advise the school. So this was my first experience with an observation tour. I now swear by them. I went up to the U.S. with most of the group. Over a 10 day period we visited vocational training institutions and learned about competency based instruction programs. We also went to the American Management Associations in New York. I’ll get into that in a moment because it was very significant.

During that trip I put everybody to work. Everybody was assigned a day. At the end of the day that person was responsible for running a meeting where we reviewed what we learned that day. The person running the meeting was then responsible for writing up the day as part of our trip report. I was kiddingly called the tough taskmaster. It was a tremendous bonding experience.

The day before we left the United States we spent the afternoon sorting out what had we learned. The person responsible for that day said “You know, I’ve been thinking about this. I’ve seen the role that private businessmen play in the United States in guiding training and I’ve been thinking about it. Instead of being an advisory group to AID, I think we should become an advisory group to our own country.” I have never been so proud in my life.

That's when I decided it was time to throw them out of my living room and help them become their own organization. They became CADERH, the Honduran Advisory Council for Human Resources Development. CADERH, in keeping with our group composition, was designed as a tripartite organization, with representation from labor, government, and the private sector.

Q: And the three were on your trip?

BERNBAUM: Yes. The three were on the trip. I had the luxury, which very few direct hires do, of spending the next six months helping CADERH prepare a proposal for AID support. Here I was a U.S. direct hire officer who, for a year and half, had the luxury of devoting the majority of my time to helping to nurture this group.

When we left in August of '84, the Ambassador and his wife hosted a farewell luncheon in our honor at the Embassy Residence. We were asked to come up with the guest list so I included several of the CADERH people. I'll never forget this. Sitting on my right at lunch was the labor leader and sitting on my left was the head of Honduras' most influential businessmen's association. One had dark skin; one had light skin. The head of the labor association turned to me with a twinkle in his eye and he said, "Who would have ever thought two years ago before I met you Marcia and teamed up with this group that I would have ever agreed to sit at the same table with this guy, much less consider him my friend." When I returned to Honduras last year, 14 years later, this group was still together.

Q: Good.

BERNBAUM: Good and bad. The same person said, "It doesn't mean we don't fight tooth and nail over labor issues, but we are together when it comes to our dream of what we want to do with vocational skills training."

Basically what they wanted to do, and several of these people were members of the board of INFOP, was revamp INFOP. They wanted to gain private sector labor control over it, because at that time it was in the hands of the government. The program we came up with was to develop competency based materials that INFOP and other skills training institutions in Honduras could apply to improve the quality and relevance of their training. CADERH, with its tripartite composition, would be responsible for certifying skilled labor. So if you come out of INFOP or another vocational school and I'm a businessman who is going to hire you, I say "I want to make sure you've been credentialed and certified by CADERH." It was a dream that, 14 years later, hasn't yet become reality, although I understand there are some promising advances in this direction as of late.

That was very exciting, building a vision and seeing people keep with that vision.

Q: You say it hasn't reached reality yet?

BERNBAUM: I'll go into that in a moment. First, I would like to share with you another thing that I did in Honduras, during the same period, that gave me tremendous satisfaction. The advisory group in its formative period decided that it was important to expand its focus to also include management training. We visited vocational skills and management training institutions in Honduras. We invited groups to come to our meetings and make presentations. We also sponsored two sets of supply-demand surveys: one focusing on vocational skills training, the other on management training. Hours and hours of their busy time, often taking one or two days off from their businesses, went into this.

In one of our weekend events, we invited a number of management training institutions to present to us what they were doing and what their plans were. Among those who accepted our invitation was a group of young businessmen from San Pedro Sula, Honduras' key industrial city called GEMAH. They were young (in their early 30s), most from middle to lower class backgrounds. What brought them together was a Dale Carnegie course. At the course, they decided they had to do something to improve democracy in their country but they weren't exactly sure how to do this, although they thought that management was one route. At the time, they were working out of a tiny office in the stadium. They had sponsored a couple of first aid clinics, but they had a vision that they wanted to do something much more far reaching.

Tony Cauterucci, now USAID Mission Director in Honduras, and I had at separate times been to visit the American Management Associations in New York. We were very impressed with them as an organization and particularly with their Vice President for International Affairs, John McArthur. I deliberately invited the President of GEMAH, Teofilo Castillo on our observation tour to the U.S. and arranged for us, the last day, to visit the AMA in New York. I tipped off John McArthur in advance that on my agenda was helping to establish a "match" between his organization and the incipient managers association from San Pedro Sula.

John played his role beautifully and, by the end of our visit to the AMA, Teofilo couldn't wait to invite John to Honduras to set up a correspondent relationship between his association and the AMA. We used project development support funding to cover John's travel expenses to Honduras a couple of months later. With great fanfare and lots of newspaper coverage there was a formal signing ceremony to establish the relationship. During my last year I nurtured this relationship and, among others, helped GEMAH write a proposal to USAID which had GEMAH taking advantage of what AMA had to offer through the correspondent relationship to assist GEMAH, in three years, to become a self-financing management training institutions and, in so doing, support the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

And it worked like clockwork. AMA came in, brought their name and expertise and gave GEMAH a tremendous image. Within three years, as planned, GEMAH became a self-financing management institution. It eventually outgrew AMA, although relations remain very cordial. Today, 14 years later, GEMAH is highly regarded in Honduras. As happened in Panama with the APEDE, USAID/Honduras turned to GEMAH a number of years later for support with a small business development program.

I'm convinced, based on this experience and others, that when all is said and done an important key to success in development is being in the right place at the right time with the right resources. Had we

approached GEMAH a year before or a year later, I don't think they would have been as ready for our assistance...

Q: GEMAH stands for what?

BERNBAUM: Gerentes y Empresarios Asociados de Honduras — Managers and Businessmen Associated of Honduras.

Q: Is it a private institution?

BERNBAUM: Yes. It's a for-profit non-government organization. It runs courses for businessmen who can afford to pay, although they are increasingly, now that they are doing very well, providing courses to individuals of limited means...

Q: And for labor or just for...?

BERNBAUM: They provide various levels of training for high level businessmen down to mid-level managers and supervisors.

I would now like to get back to your earlier question.

The CADERH experience shows both the naivete of the project design — I will take credit for that — and what happens with changing personnel and circumstances in AID. When I left Honduras in 1984, we had designed a very ambitious project. We had a vision of what we wanted to accomplish, which I think was a good vision. What we didn't have was the technical know-how to convert this vision to reality. The mission, after I left, had difficulties contracting qualified technical assistance to assist CADERH to develop competency based training modules, which were central to the project design.

The person who replaced me was outstanding. He had the technical know-how that the members of CADERH and I didn't have, but he had a different vision. At the time, we were focusing on improving the quality of vocational skills training in Honduras primarily as a vehicle for making Honduran businesses more competitive under the CBI. He didn't disagree. However, he was deeply committed to helping small, non-profit vocational skills training institutions provide improved skills training for the poor.

Under his tutelage CADERH began focusing on this new area. It also, as time evolved, accepted funding from USAID for other activities that were ancillary to its vision. They depended entirely on USAID for their financing and, for this and other reasons, never said "no" when a new project was offered to them. They attempted to engage in self-financing activities, with USAID's support, but most of the activities they took on were not successful in reaching this objective and diverted a lot of CADERH's management time and energy from achieving its vision of improving the quality and relevance of vocational skills training in Honduras.

For many years, they were considered a great success and then last year in January, Elena Brineman, the Mission Director, approached me. She said “Marcia, CADERH is experiencing growing pains and there is only one person who can come and help them out. You’re considered the “mother” of CADERH. Therefore, you have an obligation to help them.”

Last April, 14 years after I left Honduras, I returned with great trepidation. When I debriefed the group at the end of my consultancy I said to them, “The good news is that you’re all still on CADERH’s Board. The bad news is you’re all still on CADERH’s Board. The board hadn’t changed. It had become very ingrown. They maintained the original vision but were working outside of that vision. John McArthur and I had taken them through a strategic planning exercise in the early 1980s when CADERH was in the process of being formed. However, since then, they had not done any further strategic planning.

I gave them some pretty tough medicine. Their problem in part – and I will take partial credit for this — was that they started with a lofty vision which was too ambitious. They then got caught in the vicious circle of keeping afloat financially and, in so doing, accepting funding from USAID for activities that took them away from their vision. We agreed, at the end of my visit, that it was time to reconsider what their vision was and to abide by whatever that mission might be.

I have to give tremendous credit to AID and Elena Brineman, the USAID Mission Director. She said, “I realize that we’ve got a problem. And I realize that we at AID are part of the problem. I want you to come in and help solve it. I want you to be very honest. The important thing is to get CADERH back on track.” Both the USAID Mission and CADERH wanted me to tell it to them like it was. That shows, on both sides, tremendous integrity.

From what I’ve heard since, CADERH took my recommendations seriously, and they appear to be getting back on track implementing their original vision.

Q: So the core of the issue was they were being pulled in too many directions?

BERNBAUM: That was one of the problems. They kept taking on interesting new activities that promised to generate income that fit with other USAID objectives. When I was there last April, I said to the CADERH people, “You’ve got to learn to say no, even to USAID. You’ve got to be clear on what your vision is.” They had also become so ingrown among themselves that they were not as functional as they could be. Again, what can I say? There are a lot of lessons from GEMAH and CADERH that I’m still sorting out. It’s both exciting and very humbling.

Q: They were being used in effect by AID.

BERNBAUM: I wouldn’t put it exactly that way. There was no problem with GEMAH. GEMAH became self-financing, as planned, in three years and went off the AID dole. Years later, when USAID approached them for assistance in implementing a small business development program, GEMAH took it on under their

terms. Of course, GEMAH had a major advantage over CADERH. They could charge, and charge well, for their courses. This is a problem we've encountered time and time again with so many NGOs we support. The experience with CADERH is not the only time that AID has helped establish groups with the hope that they will become self-financing only to find that they don't have the capability to do so. In the interest of keeping these institutions alive, AID pushed them to get involved in money making schemes. The result is that, in so doing, they run the risk of getting deviated from their mission.

Q: That's a good message.

BERNBAUM: With regard, to CADERH, we'll see where they're headed. I think they actually did take my recommendations. I did a participatory workshop with them the last week I was in Honduras. At the workshop I said, "The bad news is you got off track. The good news is you have a lot of things in your favor. There's a lot you can do." I played cheerleader. I also challenged them to examine their weaknesses openly and critically and take steps to do something about them.

Going back to the Ministry of Education... I left off in the early 80s — no mid 70s with the Florida Consortium — and the very bad vibes and then I returned in the early 80s. The atmosphere was still frosty, no desire for outside technical assistance. The teachers union was still going strong. In 1983 a very dynamic woman became Minister of Education. Single-handedly she broke the back of the teachers union. With that the atmosphere started to change.

When I departed in '84, the door was beginning to open to outside advisors, including very hesitantly, one or two from the United States. One of the people who subsequently came over to work for AID, Marco Tulio Mejia had been the Vice Minister of Education in the early 80s. Marco Tulio is a dear friend. We go back nearly 25 when he helped me identify students in his program at the Secondary Teachers Training College to help me do coding for my dissertation. Interestingly enough, Marco Tulio was trained in the United States, compliments of the infamous Florida.

Between '84, when I left Honduras, and '98, when I returned, AID had become the lead donor in supporting education in Honduras. During the period of the war in Central America in the late '80s and early '90s, the multilateral donors (World Bank and IDB) stopped providing support in the region. This left the playing field open to AID who was the only big donor during this period in the region. With grant funds, which made a big difference, AID was financing U.S. advisors to assist the Honduras with teacher training, textbook development, management information systems. AID also sent a large group of Hondurans from the Ministry of Education to the University of New Mexico to get Master's degrees in administration and teacher training.

I hesitate, however, to claim that the Ministry of Education had improved a great deal. Indicators of access and quality had gone up, thanks to AID support, but there continued to be serious problems with the management of the Ministry. A number of excellent USAID education officers went through Honduras — Dick Martin, Ned Van Steenwyck — and I have to congratulate them on the work they did. A recent report prepared by Ned shows impressive trends in increases in enrollments, along with improvements in educational

efficiency, much of which can be attributed to AID support.

AID helped the Ministry put in place, actually I was the “instigator,” an educational management information system, one of the first in the region. This, by the way, has not been an easy process. It has taken years to become up and running. AID is also in the process of assisting the Ministry of Education to extend education beyond the classroom to reach youth who have dropped out of school or who no longer qualify to do to school. The program, “Educatodos” recently received a UNESCO award.

My concern, in Honduras and elsewhere, is that starting in the mid 1990s USAID, due in large part to funding declines, started handing over its education programs to the World Bank and IDB. From what I have seen, I am not convinced that either institution has the technical expertise to provide the kind of assistance that AID has been providing in Honduras, El Salvador and elsewhere.

One key lesson learned, which you can’t get around. If you want to see results, especially in basic education, hang in there for the long term, tough it out through thick and thin, take a low key/back seat role when you need to...

Q: How many years altogether to do this, do you think?

BERNBAUM: We’re talking 20-30 years. If you look at AID support in countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala you are looking at a record (with a couple of interruptions) that goes back to the 1960s and probably way before that.

One of my pet peeves is that we don’t document our accomplishments over time. Everyone agrees it’s a good idea but somehow there is never funding to do it. And it’s a shame, because there are some fascinating stories to be told and not just in education but most sectors USAID has worked in.. That’s one of my frustrations: that we don’t take time as an agency to go back...

Q: Would you say the education program was Americanized by this process?

BERNBAUM: Oh, I don’t like that word.

Q: I know. That’s why I said it, because in a sense it was such a heavy U.S. engagement in the process. How do you deal with the multicultural...?

BERNBAUM: We often contract advisors from other countries. For example, when AID introduced the Escuela Nueva approach from Colombia in Guatemala, a very competent Colombian was brought in.

This doesn’t exactly address your question, but I would like to set aside a few moments to reflect on AID and its competitive edge in education. A little over two years ago AID, in a reduction-in-force, got rid of six of its most senior education officers, virtually gutting its technical expertise in education. I can count on the

fingers of one hand the senior education people left in the Agency and this is very distressing. There is no doubt that in education, and I hear that the same is happening in other sectors, that AID is losing its competitive edge. So if you were to ask me know what is AID's comparative advantage in education, I would have to hesitate before replying.

AID's special niche is that it has the capability with grant funding to finance innovations to be on the "edge" of new technologies and approaches, to take risks. AID, which provides grant funding, has the ability to bring in advisors in a way that the multilateral banks, that provide loan funding, can't. While I don't ordinarily agree with pushing advisors when they aren't wanted, there are times when you need to nudge the right people. AID has played a key role in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras on the quality side — with management information systems, achievement tests, innovative textbook programs, teacher training. However, given what is happening right now, I hold my breath. The drop in support for education, at least in Latin America, was not during the Reagan Administration but rather the Bush and Clinton Administrations when scarce funding for education starting "migrating" to the Africa region due to Congressional pressure.

Q: That's very interesting because I sat in meetings with administrators and others in AID during the Reagan Administration, and they were very vehement that the U.S. had no comparative advantage in the education sector.

BERNBAUM: How fascinating. Well remember, we were protected in Central America in the 1980s. Central America had all this Kissinger money coming in which, for political reasons, we had to spend and spend quickly. Right now the Africa Bureau is protected because for years there has been an earmark for basic education in that region. So, I think you may be right. I was looking at the Latin America Bureau only. Of course in the 80s, as I'm about to get into, we had more money than we knew what to do with in all sectors in Central America...

Q: How did our efforts respond to preserving the Honduran cultural dimension or did we stay clear of the social, historical...?

BERNBAUM: I think that's a very good question, and it's one that I can't answer because I wasn't there the last 14 years, and I don't know to what extent we respected the cultural side. I know that Ned, who played a key role throughout this period, is a deeply respectful person. I can't speak for the other advisors. I know that the Academy for Educational Development is one of the best education groups out there, and I understand they have done a good job. I know, from when I was in Honduras in March of last year, that the vibes I got were all extremely positive in terms of the quality and usefulness of technical assistance. We were in a variety of technical areas. We were in management information systems, achievement tests. When we got into things like textbook design which is very sensitive, it was Marco Tulio Mejia who represented AID. As a Honduran, and a highly respected one, there was clearly cultural sensitivity.

Q: He was a senior FSN then?

BERNBAUM: Yes. During this period, USAID/Honduras had the continuity of both Marco Tulio Mejia and Ned Van Steenwyck, although you had other education officers coming in and out. Ned basically kept the ship together on the CADERH and GEMAH side. Both Marco Tulio and Ned, in their dealings with the Ministry of Education, were very low key. Much is accomplished through relationships built on confidence and trust. Something we frequently struggle with in AID is the constant turnover in staff. When we have continuity on both sides, we do very well if we've got a good group.

Q: Looking at Honduras more broadly. What was the situation? How was it evolving beyond education? Did you get a feel for that?

BERNBAUM: I was in Honduras during a pivotal period. You had the Caribbean Basin Initiative. A few months before I left, Henry Kissinger and his Commission came in. I was the Control Officer that day, I remember. The whole program — USAID's presence in Honduras, the U.S. Government presence, the U.S. military presence — expanded. The U.S. Government established military bases in Comayagua outside of Tegucigalpa. You had the beginnings of a very, very rough civil war period where Honduras was being used as a launching point for dealing with the problems with the Sandinistas.

Q: Was that going on while you were there?

BERNBAUM: It was beginning as I left. It was I think maybe '83 when that all started.

Q: You didn't have any connection with the Contra operation?

BERNBAUM: No. I had no personal connection with it. But by the time Eric and I left the floodgate was opening, increased interest in Honduras on the part of the U.S. Government because of the problems with Cuba and the guerilla movements not so much in Honduras but in Salvador and Nicaragua.

Q: Were you having a problem with the Cubans in Honduras?

BERNBAUM: No. There was no Cuban presence in Honduras that I was aware of. What you had was a very left politicized teachers union. However, as I mentioned when I was there in the early 1980s, it's back was broken. You never had the dynamic of what happened in Salvador and Nicaragua take place in Honduras.

Q: Why would Honduras be different?

BERNBAUM: I'm not so sure. I would be a poor person to make a definitive statement. But let me take a couple of strikes at it. You don't have as much a disparity between the rich and poor in a country like Honduras as you do in Salvador and Guatemala. Nicaragua was another story. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the war had a lot to do with limited arable land and many people fighting over this land. That was not an issue in Honduras.

Q: What was their economic condition?

BERNBAUM: The economy has done fairly well. I think, and again I wasn't there in the last 80s, that Honduras did take advantage of the CBI. In fact, one of my husband's legacies was that he designed a project that helped initiate several export zones in Honduras that generated high levels of employment. When I returned to Honduras last year, his former colleagues told me, "Your husband would be so proud." The project he designed met its targets and exceeded them.

Q: But the poverty was pretty pervasive?

BERNBAUM: Strong poverty.

Q: ...despite all this positive feeling.

BERNBAUM: And it's still a very poor country.

Q: And even more poor today.

BERNBAUM: And, of course, Honduras is devastated. Hurricane Mitch has just been horrible...

Q: But the basic population was fairly uniformly very poor?

BERNBAUM: I wouldn't say uniformly very poor. I would just say — and again you'd have to go back to statistics which I haven't tracked for years — that the disjuncts between the rich and the poor are not that large. You have in Honduras an increasing middle class.

Q: Did they have different indigenous groups?

BERNBAUM: No. Unlike Guatemala where you have many different indigenous groups, you do not have this situation in Honduras. Like in Salvador and Nicaragua it is primarily a Ladino population, with the exception of La Mosquitea — the jungles — where there are various indigenous groups. You have the big difference that you have in many countries between the highlands and the coast. The highland capital, Tegucigalpa, very conservative, low key. The coastal city, San Pedro Zula, a boomtown with many well to do businessmen. For example, Teofilo Castillo, who was director of GEMAH, when I was there in '84 and until at least year when I visited Honduras still General Manager of GEMAH, has risen from the ranks of being a lower income individual without a father who, with his family, had to scrape top make ends meet, to being an established businessman who lives very comfortably.

Q: There was also the dominant role of the U.S. plantation — bananas, etc...?

BERNBAUM: Of course, yes. You had the banana plantations that have been there for years. What you

are hearing me say, by the way, is from the eyes Marcia Bernbaum, the Education Officer, who was off in her little corner not necessarily always looking at the big picture. If you were to interview a person such as my late husband Eric who was a project development officer, you would have a broader perspective.

Q: What about education in relation to the plantations...?

BERNBAUM: Yes. Well, we didn't have much to do with that. I do know from what I've been told more anecdotally that the banana companies did in fact invest quite a lot of money in education of their personnel, that they had good schools for the kids and such. But I can't tell you much more, because we weren't involved with...

Q: So it was isolated from the general public?

BERNBAUM: I suspect so. Remember, when I was working with business training and vocational training, our focus was primarily on the industrial sector and on companies who were preparing to export their goods to the U.S. I was not involved at all in the agricultural sector.

Q: How did you find working with the Hondurans?

BERNBAUM: Very frustrating. I love the Hondurans dearly and many of my best friends are Hondurans. Eric was a Peace Corps volunteer from '67 to '69 so we have friends that go back 25 almost 30 years. The Hondurans, however, are famous for never saying exactly what they think. You can go into a meeting with the Minister of Education and think you have total agreement and find out that you don't. I found that very difficult because I tend to be very direct. It's one of the reasons I enjoyed working with CADERH because many of them had been trained from the United States, and I could communicate with them differently.

I remember saying to a good friend of ours who worked with Eric and later became Minister of Finance, I said, "Moncho, you know, it must be some problem with my language, my Spanish. I don't get the right nuances. I don't fully understand often what happens in meetings even though I speak good Spanish I tend to misinterpret signals."

His reply, "It's not just you." He jokingly said, "Why do you think we are such an underdeveloped country? We never say what we think. We never communicate with each other." That's sort of a joke. I think you find that in Guatemala. You don't find that in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguans are very straightforward and put on the table exactly what they think.

Q: Do you have any understanding of why that is one of their characteristics?

BERNBAUM: Larry Harrison, who has written on this, would tell you that this goes back to the Spanish colonization and the Catholic Church — the notion that there is a self-fulfilling prophecy and that your future is out of your hands. That's a gross over generalization, too, because you find many exceptions to that rule.

But what I can say is that is very different in Kenya. In Kenya being forthright was an important value. This made me very comfortable because I am a forthright person.

Q: Anything else on Honduras?

BERNBAUM: There are plenty of other memories but I think we should probably move on.

Q: Well maybe you can add to them later if you'd like.

BERNBAUM: Fine.

Q: Well, then, you left Honduras when?

Returned to USAID/Washington - education and the Caribbean Basin Initiative - 1984

BERNBAUM: In July of '84. It was time for us to move on to our next posting. We decided it was time to come back to the United States. We had two young children. They were three and seven. I had lived in the United States very few years of my life. I have fond memories of going to an average American public school and riding my bike in the neighborhood and playing in the alleys, and I wanted that for my kids. We were also told for our own career growth it would be good to put in an appearance in Washington. So we made it known we wanted to come back to Washington, and we both got very good job offers.

I remember getting a call one day out of the blue. Again, this was Washington taking care of us. It was Terry Stephen, the head of the Executive Office, calling to tell me that the decision had been made to bring me to Washington as the Deputy in the Education Division. I thought "Little old me, a Deputy? That's quite a big deal." I felt quite honored and received congratulations from many people.

I was already assigned to Washington when Henry Kissinger came to Honduras. I believe it was in March or April of 1984. Not long afterwards, the Kissinger report came out. This was my first contact with the political scene. Up until then, with a few small exceptions, I had been doing development. So the Kissinger Commission report comes out.

Just before leaving Honduras, I remember my boss and I were reading the Kissinger education recommendations and laughing. We were, to put it mildly, underwhelmed with the specific recommendations and the analysis that went into them. Our mistake at the time was not to take these recommendations seriously.

When I started my new job in Washington in September, my boss was Paul White. He had been my boss in Panama when I was an intern. Paul said, "Guess what? You and I are dividing the turf in this office. I'm taking the Kissinger Commission recommendations on training, and you get to come up with the plan for implementing the education recommendations throughout Latin American/Central America."

I laughed and said, “Oh, you’ve got to be joking. This is really funny.”

He said, “No, I’m not joking.”

So there I was, put in charge of implementing what I thought were a pretty silly set of recommendations. But the money was coming in tidal waves for Central America. I remember the Africa Bureau looking longingly at all that money. You probably remember that.

Q: Yes.

BERNBAUM: We had to spend it, so I decided to do what I...

Q: Do you remember what the Commission’s recommendations were?

BERNBAUM: Yes. There were recommendations in primary education, there were recommendations for improving literacy, vocational skills training and higher education. Then there was the very political recommendation that 10,000 disadvantaged Central Americans be trained in the United States, which Paul handled.

Q: The whole works.

BERNBAUM: Oh, yes. These recommendations were submitted in draft and the AID Education Office in Washington and my predecessors were asked to come up with targets. In primary education my colleagues set some incredibly ambitious targets, like cutting primary repetition in half in five years, totally undoable. But, for the better or worse, they went into the report and on the record.

I said, “This is crazy. These targets are not achievable in the time frames set out.”

Paul White gave me free reign. My task was to come up with something doable that made the Hill happy. My solution was to work with Central American USAID missions to prepare what we called “Action Plans.” They weren’t sector analyses, we didn’t have the time. We were under pressure. I organized teams of what I called “in house” and “out house” (recently retired) staff. Each team had four people on it. Usually there were two direct hire people, from our office and another USAID mission, and two retired Education Officers. We went to each country for two to three weeks and did quick and dirty plans for how to spend money over the next five years in each of those sub-sectors. We did it in a highly collaborative fashion with each Mission.

Q: With the government or the Mission?

BERNBAUM: With the Missions. We did, however, once in country, meet with government officials and others. Each team, in collaboration with the local USAID Mission, came up with its recommendations. These were submitted to the USAID Mission would then decide what they wanted to do. We respected that.

Between September of '84 and June of '85, we fielded six teams to every country except Nicaragua including ROCAP. I headed the first team that went to Honduras. I also headed the team in El Salvador. Then based on the team's recommendations, subsequently approved by the local USAID Missions, I put together an overall action plan for the region. I wrote it up and we formally presented it for review. Malcolm Butler was then the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Latin America. The reaction to the package was very interesting. My boss, Paul White, looked at it and he said, "Marcia, this is too developmental. It's is never going to fly. You have taken a political imperative, and you've approached it on developmental terms. This just isn't going to work."

I said, "Well, Paul, I don't know how to do it any differently." So I took a political tidal wave and then we, with the Missions, took advantage of that tidal wave to accomplish our objectives. Because we were not under the limelight, Congress was looking at the Peace Scholarship program and not at us, we got away with it. What I did do, however, which was something that I consider very important, was to work with the Harvard Institute for International Development and Research Triangle Institute to come up with a system for tracking indicators so that we could prepare a credible report every year to Congress on our progress in carrying out the Kissinger Recommendations. We were looking at things beyond access in education — educational quality, repetition rates, number of years to produce a sixth grade graduate. In these areas each country's database was very weak. But we did, thanks to the technical assistance we sought and received, come up with an tracking system that seemed to work.

Actually, I feel good about this. Our office was congratulated that we were the only technical office that every year was able to come up with a report which didn't look like just an amalgamation of country progress reports but a regional progress report.

Something else I was able to accomplish was to renegotiate the targets set in the Kissinger report to something that was more realistic and achievable. Because people respected our process and nobody really cared all that much about the education side, as opposed to the training activities, we were able to avoid what could have been a very embarrassing situation.

Q: What scale of resources were you dealing with? Do you remember?

BERNBAUM: It varied from country to country.

Q: Approximately overall.

BERNBAUM: A couple hundred million dollars in education over a five year period. Well, in the Peace Scholarship Program from '84 to '89, at least two hundred million dollars. I think the education activities varied from country to country. I don't remember the total for non-training related education activities, but I would say, given my recollection of the education portfolios in those countries, in education we're talking anywhere between 30 and 60 million dollars per country over the five year period.

Among the various things I did, during the period, to assist AID Missions in Central America to implement the Kissinger education recommendations was to go to El Salvador to head up one of the Action Plan teams. I also prepared the chapter on vocational skills and management training and ended up coming up with a proposal not unlike the CADERH proposal, except in the case of El Salvador what we did was work just with well to do businessmen. The right conditions were in place, even better than Honduras.

A year or so later, in 1987, I accompanied a group of Salvadorian businessmen to the United States on an observation tour, that was very similar to the one we arranged in 1982 for the CADERH people in Honduras. A few months later I went to El Salvador to help this group of businessmen prepare a proposal to AID.

When I arrived in El Salvador, I had in mind a small pilot project such as what we had prepared for CADERH in Honduras which was around \$1,000,000. The Mission, which at the time was funneling enormous amounts of AID funding to El Salvador, told me that they couldn't deal with such small proposals. They recommended that I prepare a proposal along the lines of \$15 million! I was shocked, and not very pleased. However, I did what they wanted and, as it turns out, this group took the money and ran with it. I'm told that today, 12 years later, they are an established and very reputable organization in El Salvador that are not only doing excellent work in the area of vocational skills and management training but also playing an important role in promoting educational reform with the Ministry of Education.

This was a very formative period in my AID career. First of all, it was a heady time. We had the Kissinger education recommendations that we had to implement with big bucks flowing in to make them happen. We had the Caribbean Basin Initiative. And then the pressure extended beyond Central America and the Caribbean to South America as well.

It was, by far, the highest stress job I had encountered in my nearly 10 year career in USAID. We used to joke that we were like an emergency room in a hospital but worse because every time a new patient would come in on a stretcher, our latest crisis, we'd have to dump the "patient" on whom we were doing curettage on the floor to attend the new "patient."

The pressure was so intense that I came to the realization my priorities were all messed up. I was spending too much time at work and not enough with my family. So, one day in 1986 or 1987 I walked into work and told my boss and my boss's boss and then his boss (Terry Brown, now the Assistant Administrator for Management) that my first priority was my family. They thought I was nuts, but they respected it.

Let me talk about the positives and the negatives of that period.

I was in Washington as the Deputy of the Education Office for Latin America for five years. In addition to what I have already mentioned, I put in place a glorified IQC (indefinite quantity contract) called "Central America Field Technical Support" to provide quick turnaround assistance to USAID Missions in Central America to help them design programs that would permit them to implement their Kissinger action plans. I also put funds into the contract to monitor and report on their progress and to permit cross fertilization of

experiences. Among others, I was able to put in place some rather creative devices to do data tracking.

During this period I was given a tremendous amount of liberty. Nobody was looking at me very closely because what I was doing was not in the political limelight as was the Peace Scholarship Program which was also run out of our office. We had the money and we were expected to do something. It was an ideal context in which to do a lot of creative work.

One of the activities I carried out during this period which gave me great pleasure relates to one of my passions — encouraging the cross-fertilization of good practices. When I came to Washington from Honduras in '84, for the first time, I had the opportunity to become acquainted with the AID/Guatemala program. I found, to my amazement, that there were many parallels between the AID/Guatemala education program and the education program we were implementing in Honduras and many lessons to be learned that were relevant to the Honduras experience that I had been totally unaware of while in Honduras. I vowed at that time that an important role I could play while in AID/Washington was to facilitate in cross fertilizing experiences and lessons learned between AID Missions. Not only did we in AID/Honduras have a lot to learn from the AID/Guatemala experience, but USAID/Guatemala had a lot to learn from AID/Honduras, AID/El Salvador and so on.

During my rotation in AID/Washington as Deputy of the Education Division in the LAC Bureau I obtained a great deal of professional satisfaction from doing precisely this — from the most mundane (sharing project documents between USAID missions, preparing news bulletins) to coordinating the preparation of publications and conferences that focused on sharing of experiences and highlighting lessons learned.

My education colleagues in the field really appreciated my efforts. And I was delighted to be able to do something that I strongly believed in, and continue to believe in, and to be able to exercise my creativity in carrying it out.

That's the good news. The not so good news is that it was during this period that I began to experience disillusionment with the Agency and, I'm afraid to say, that disillusionment progressively became stronger.

Up until 1987 I had been successful in keeping a distance from the Peace Scholarship Program. It was a very political program. James Bond, an influential staffer on the Senate Appropriations Committee made very clear to USAID from the time the Kissinger recommendations came out that he had no faith in AID's ability to implement the Kissinger recommendation to bring in 10,000 disadvantaged people to the U.S. for training. He wasted no time in writing in an earmark for Georgetown University to funnel funds to community colleges in the states represented by the Senators that sat on the Appropriations Committee. This earmark, which began at \$2 million a year in 1985, had crept up to nearly \$20 million by the time I was transferred in 1989. As a tax paying citizen I was horrified — horrified that a staffer who was not elected had the power that he had, horrified that my tax paying dollars were being used to carry out a program that made little sense. At the time in Central America there was not a tradition of community colleges. Disadvantaged students therefore, when they returned, could not transfer into regular universities to complete their studies. In addition,

often their Associate of Arts degrees were not recognized within the workforce in their countries.

Did this stop the earmark from growing? Not at all. The motivation was very clear, provide benefits to the Senators on the committees, as they would be able to favor community colleges in their States.

To further complicate things, we had at the time an Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean who was quite a character. Bond used to like to tweak him and used the Peace Scholarship Program as one of the means of accomplishing this.

This is NOT why I joined AID.

However, in late 1986 my boss, Paul White, was transferred. I was left holding down the fort for three months until his replacement came. I remember, just after Paul departed, going to the new Director of the Development Resources office for Latin America who was my boss three times removed. I figured honesty is the best policy. I said, "Terry, I'm happy to take over the office for these three months, but I want you to know that I know nothing about the Peace Scholarship Program. Paul was too busy to brief me on it before he left and he pretty much handled it himself. I know that our Assistant Administrator maintains a strong interest in the program, but I'm not sure I will always be able to answer his questions."

Terry smiled and he said, "Neither do I. Let's learn together." So Terry, as the head of DR and myself several levels down, went through trial by fire, between dealing with the Assistant Administrators incessant demands for information on the program and the Hill's demands for information.

Then when my boss came and I started to move out of it, Terry and his Deputy said, "Not so quickly Marcia. You have the capability to do tracking. You've got a good financial nose. You are going to have to stick with this program."

I said, "Must I?"

They said, "Yes, you must."

So, I was thrown, unhappily, into having to deal with the Hill. I must say at that point, Haven, was when I began to rebel. I rebelled as a tax paying citizen watching millions of dollars being spent, not necessarily poorly, because some of the training turned out to be excellent, but without any analysis of what we usually do, with earmarks piling up.

And then earmarks started to crowd each other and leave little funding for anything else. In the late 1980s Congress put pressure on AID to spend more money in basic education, specifically in Africa. As education monies were declining this put the Agency in a situation where, between the two earmarks, there was hardly any funding for anything else.

That is when I started asking myself, “What am I doing here? I came in here to do development and this is all political imperatives.” I can’t tell you how frustrating that was.

But let me get back to the positives before I continue with the negatives.

I talked about the creativity to do a lot of work on the developmental side. Another positive was that I adopted Terry Brown, now the Assistant Administrator for Management, as my second mentor. He had taken the Senior Management course right before I took the Management Skills Course, similar to the Senior Management Course but for mid level USAID officials. As we acquired a common language and shared many of the same management values we became very close. To this day Terry and I maintain a close relationship. One of the special characteristics of the two courses was the emphasis given to values and people skills. Both have, subsequently, been decisive factors in many decisions I have taken.

In late 1988, about 8 months before leaving for my next assignment to Kenya, Terry approached me and said “I’m signing you up for the Development Studies Program (DSP).

I said “I don’t want to go.”

His response. “You’re going. You are very narrow, and if you are to move into Senior Management, where I believe you belong, you need to be able to look at the bigger picture. In addition, I have just been made a member of the DSP advisory board, and I need an inside spy to tell me what the program is like.”

When I returned from the DSP I ran into my first major values clash since I had joined the Agency. It was within my office and it was over the Peace Scholarship Program. While I continued to try to justify the program on developmental terms, others more effectively defended it on purely political terms. We were each looking at what we were doing with a very different lens.

Q: What was the difference?

BERNBAUM: One person in particular, was convinced that the main value of coming to the U.S. for participant training was the opportunity to stay in the homes of U.S. citizens, to “experience America.” His justification was that, if we were to counter the Soviet threat this would be an effective strategy.

I was more interested in the academic side of the program. I felt he was putting much too much emphasis on the touchy feely side and not enough on the academics.

Actually in retrospect, I now understand where he was coming from. But at the time I was very threatened by this logic.

While I was in Washington, the Agency began to scrutinize the use of Operating Expense (OE) funds. With that and the beginnings of the reductions in staff, we were left with our hands tied behind our backs. Our

ability to backstop our field missions from AID/Washington started going down as did our ability to adequately review the capability of our field missions. This was also frustrating to me as I felt first and foremost that our role in Washington — quite apart from dealing with big earmarks — was to help our field missions accomplish their objectives, be they very simple things in helping them deal with internal paper work to helping them strategically.

I would be remiss in terms of my memories of my time in the LAC Bureau if I didn't address my role in designing the CLASP II program. We had already put 200 million dollars into CLASP I. CLASP II was again...

Q: What's that?

BERNBAUM: The Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program. This was the earmark from Congress.

Q: The Peace Scholarship?

BERNBAUM: Yes. The Peace Scholarship Program to bring disadvantaged people to the United States. It had expanded from Central America to the Caribbean to the whole region. The first phase was coming to an end about the time I was leaving the Bureau, and I was asked, before leaving, to design the follow on to this program.

I said, "Okay, I'll do that. But I'm damned as a taxpaying citizen if we're going to continue to throw money at this program without knowing what we're accomplishing. It's not sufficient to me to be able to count beans — to know how many people went, how many were men and women, how many were disadvantaged, how many were indigenous." I wanted to know the impact.

So Terry Brown and his deputy gave me the liberty, under our field support contract, to research the best way of measuring impacts. I brought some of the top academics in the States — a specialist in experimental design who was the guru when I was in graduate school, a statistician, and an anthropologist. I was with them for three days — one student with three professors.

I said, "Gentlemen, we're about to go into the next level of the Peace Scholarship Program, and I need a way of assessing whether we're having an impact. So tell me, do we do experimentals and controls? Do we do pretests and post tests? Help advise us."

They gave me some excellent advice. The bottom line was forget all that garbage. This is the real world. Even we, the academics, now realize that many of the principles of experimental design simply don't apply in the real world.

Their key advice was to start by identifying the audiences and then figuring out the information these audiences

needed to make decisions, when they needed it, and in what form — a very practical approach. Lee Cronback, the guru of experimental design when I was in graduate school, said, “Marcia, in making a decision on evaluation there are two things you need to ask yourself in the course of deciding on the amount of money and time you want to put into evaluation. The first is, “Do you know the answer to the question you are posing or not?” If you already know the answer to the question, don’t bother to put in a lot of money to answer what you already know. The second is “what leverage do you have once you know the answer to the question?” If you don’t have much leverage don’t bother to sink money and time in. However, if you do have leverage to do something with the data, and if you don’t know the answer to the question, and it is an important question to have answered for decision making purposes, by all means invest time and money into answering it.”

He also counseled me on packaging. If the decision maker is the USAID Administrator, when does he need that information? If he needs it in one month, don’t design a two year evaluation. If he needs it in one month, what does he need it for? What decisions does he need to make? Go out of your way to give him information on a timely basis and packaged in a way he can use it to make decisions.

As he pointed out, the Administrator does not need an academic treatise. He doesn’t need experimentals and controls and significant levels.

He also advised me to come up with a flexible design for the CLASP II evaluation. People’s interests change over time. A question which is hot right now may no longer be hot in six months. And if you have already answered the question now, why keep collecting the same data once you already have the answer?

Terry Brown and the LAC Bureau, permitted me to take this advice and prepare, for the CLASP II evaluation, a design that was practical, flexible and put the decision maker up front. The design permitted us to collect information for interested people on the Hill. It also gave the Missions the evaluation data they needed for decision making. And it was flexible.

Q: Did you evaluate the previous program?

BERNBAUM: No. We left in place a system for the new project.

Q: Did you have any sense about the results of this program?

BERNBAUM: Yes. The contract was competed. I put together the RFP just before I left the Bureau. The contract closed out a couple years ago. They were able to show some very impressive impacts. By that time, the interest in the Peace Scholarship Program, however, had gone way down.

Q: I’ve always understood that evaluating the impact of participant programs is extremely difficult.

BERNBAUM: Yes. But what they were able to do was tailor the evaluation designs to reflect the

characteristics and needs of the different programs that were designed by field missions. Costa Rica, for example, sent hundreds of youth to be trained through 4H clubs in the U.S. Others sent small businessmen to be trained in Vermont. Others were sending people for masters degrees. You simply couldn't lump all these groups into one whole.

If you're bringing one person up for three months up to learn about how to do underwater basket weaving in the United States, and he goes to a convention and a short course, you've got to track what he does, what happens when he goes back to his life in terms of his job, in terms of what he does in his community, etc.

What the contractor did was to put in place flexible systems that permit them to gather data that were common to all programs, and then for each program, tailor other data to reflect the specific characteristics of that program.

Q: And they were able to track each individual so to speak in each group?

BERNBAUM: Yes. An AID Mission would have a particular interest in a certain group and, if they wanted to they could ask the contractor to do individualized tracking of participants. But the point here is that AID/Washington, as was the case for the first Peace Scholarship Program, was no longer the only user of data. The field Missions were now being asked to look at what are their information and decision making needs where and evaluations were designed around their needs.

Q: So what kind of conclusion did you reach about the first phase program which was highly politicized?

BERNBAUM: The first phase had a tracking system, but it was primarily bean counting.

Q: We had no conclusion about impact?

BERNBAUM: Correct. Under the second program, the contractor was able to get a closer look at the impacts of the home stays and the Experience America component, at what happened in terms of personal and professional impacts when they returned to their countries.

Q: Do you think Congress's political objective was achieved by this?

BERNBAUM: I believe so, but I can't verify this with full authority because I am speaking of events that took place after I left the Latin America Bureau, and I don't have the details.

Q: The participants were turned around from being critical of the U.S., which is what I think the authors had in mind, wasn't it?

BERNBAUM: They were able to show attitude change. When people came to the U.S., they were

impressed with the volunteerism in our country, and when they returned to their countries they started their own volunteer groups. They had been given exposure to how civic groups operate, how PTAs work, how municipalities function and how citizens lobby municipalities to make decisions. Yes, there is some very nice data, which shows the people...

Q: This was a politically driven program.

BERNBAUM: Yes, it was.

Q: On the education side what was the core of what you were trying to...?

BERNBAUM: Most of the work in education was in basic education, focusing on quality as opposed to quantity improvement because in Central...

Q: How do you spend a huge amount of money to get quality? Where do you spend it?

BERNBAUM: A lot of money went into text books and teacher training. Many teachers went to the U.S. under the Peace Scholarship Program for training. Some received master's degrees; others attended short term training programs specifically designed for them. A lot of money went into teacher training, management information systems, which are not cheap, textbooks. Textbooks were probably the biggest ticket item in terms of expenditures — it is not cheap to design, reproduce and distribute textbooks. There was some classroom construction.

Q: In what subjects mostly?

BERNBAUM: Across the board, since we were dealing with primary education. If you go to Honduras, for example, you'll see textbooks for all the subject areas from grade one through grade six. During that period USAID also invested in management and vocational skills training with some pretty good results.

Q: It wasn't too much money after all?

BERNBAUM: In the case of vocational skills and management training, I don't believe it was too much money. In El Salvador, for example, the NGO we helped establish — FEPADE — was made up of a group of very effective entrepreneurs. I'm told they used the initial USAID funding quite effectively. They now receive very little money from USAID. Their funding comes from the World Bank and the IDB. I understand they are now a very prestigious institution in El Salvador.

Q: So in effect the Kissinger Commission initiative, from your perspective in education, was effective?

BERNBAUM: On balance, I would say yes, as we chose to interpret and implement the Kissinger

recommendations. However, Guatemala is a different story. The program there has floundered due to a weak Ministry of Education, changes in USAID Mission staff, and priorities. So much has to do with leadership on both the host country side and on the Mission side. Continuity is also critical. While I risk over generalizing here, I believe that in countries where USAID had a fairly good strategy and new Mission Directors permitted that strategy to stay in place, we had better results than in countries where changes in mission leadership brought in place drastic changes in education strategy and priorities.

El Salvador, for example, has done quite well over the last several years: AID maintained continuity in its strategy and program focus, and there was an extraordinarily dynamic woman who has been Minister of Education for many years, who kept continuity on the Ministry side.

Let me just close with a comment on Pineda Ponce who was one of the reasons I decided to join AID. When I went back to Honduras in 1998 as a consultant I reconnected with Pineda Ponce after nearly 17 years. Pineda Ponce left his post as Minister of Education in mid-1981 to campaign for the 1981 Presidential elections not long after I arrived in Honduras. He was supposed to return under the new government as Minister of Education but he didn't. Instead he moved to Congress and gradually, over the years, made his way up. When I returned to Honduras in 1998, Rafael Pineda Ponce was the President of Congress, the second most powerful person in the country. I decided I wanted to see him. It had been many years. I set up an appointment to meet with him.

It was a very interesting event. I walked into the Congressional Palace and was ushered through several anterooms until I got to the room that led into his office. While I was sitting there two photographers came in and sat down. I didn't think anything of it. I assumed they were there for another event.

Suddenly the door to his office opened and the two photographers went scurrying in. And then I was invited in. I thought, "Oh my God. Those photographers are here because of me!" Of course, Pineda Ponce had staged this event. Once a politician always a politician.

So here I am walking in with a cup of coffee in one hand and my briefcase slung along my shoulder. The photographers were behind Pineda Ponce. My first image of him was that he had aged and then I realized we both had aged. We gave each other a big abrazo. The photographers took some pictures and left.

It was a terrific meeting. I started by telling him about Eric's death. He hadn't known. Then we started reminiscing about the old days. I said, "You know Professor, you were my first boss. You were a real visionary and I really believed in you." I said, "I've come to believe in my life that having a vision is very important for effective leadership."

He said, "You are absolutely right."

I began to realize why I had been spellbound by Pineda Ponce when I worked with him in the 1970s. The guy is quite charismatic. He told me that he had carried his vision to Congress, and he was putting in place

a program to provide management training and strategic planning for all the Congressmen. He commented that, while his heart was still in education, he didn't have a lot to say over what was being done in education in Honduras. It was a wonderful to reconnect with this guy after so many years.

When I left the meeting I was told by his secretary that there were some people from the press waiting downstairs to interview me.

I said, "Me? Why me?"

Her response, "It says here that you are from AID."

I walked down stairs and was greeted with six microphones shoved in front of my face. They asked, "Why are you here? Tell us what you discussed with the President of Congress."

I said, "He and I are dear friends. He was my first mentor. We reminisced about days past when I worked for him when he was Director General of Primary Education."

They weren't interested in that. "Well, surely you were here to talk about AID?" they asked.

"No, I'm here on a AID consultancy. But we didn't discuss that."

I said, "Gentleman, I can't tell you."

They finally went away because they realized I didn't have much to offer them that was newsworthy.

A few months ago I received a lovely letter from Pineda Ponce. He sent me a biography that had been done on him and asked for help with the hurricane. It has meant a lot to reconnect with this gentleman who played such an important role in my early career.

Another vignette before we move to my next posting.

For our first four posts Eric and I were basically taken care of. We never worried about our next post as we knew someone was watching over us. But in 1987 this all changed. We realized it was time to start planning for our next move. We put in a bid to go Indonesia.

One day my boss came in and he said, "I don't want to scare you but there's a serious problem in the AID/Somalia Mission. Eighteen of 22 foreign service officer are leaving his summer. I just found out you and your husband are about to be force placed to Somalia."

I said, "You must be joking."

He said, “No, I’m not.”

And he wasn’t.

Eric and I went through a battle over the next month that I will never forget. Since there was a placement problem, not many people were willing to go to Somalia, the personnel office decided to, where possible, force place tandem couples believing that in this way they would get two for the price of one. Eric and I were vulnerable because we were up for reassignment and we had never been in a hardship post. Had we gone to Somalia, our older daughter, Shana, would have had to go to boarding school her second year and we were dead set against this.

So we appealed on the basis of our daughter. We were not willing to send her to boarding school.

I remember one day a woman from personnel calling and saying, “I understand there’s a problem with your daughter.”

I said, “Well, no, she’s a normal 13 year old, and she needs to be with her parents. She needs to be at home, and we don’t want to send her to boarding school.”

I’ll never forget the woman’s response was, “Is she under psychiatric treatment?”

I said, “No, there’s nothing wrong with her. We just don’t think it’s appropriate to send her to boarding school.”

We finally went up to the head of Personnel to appeal it and we won it. As we were leaving his office he said, “I don’t know what happened but the word is running around in personnel that you have a daughter with severe learning difficulties.”

That’s the point at which we had a wake up call. We realized that we had been leading a very blessed life and that we had to watch out for ourselves.

His number two, who was not happy with his boss’s decision said to us, “I’m going to get you next time.” For the next year, until we locked in our next assignment I lived in terror. To avoid getting force placed we looked for an assignment well in advance. We knew that nobody was going to help us. And we ended up being assigned to Kenya.

Attended the Development Studies Program - 1989

Q: Let’s talk about the Development Studies Program. What was it? What did you do?

BERNBAUM: It was a seven week program. The focus was on macroeconomic growth. Economic

stabilization and structural adjustment were in vogue at that time. We had wonderful faculty — Mike Rock, Jim Weaver, Paula Cruz, Ken Kusterer, and Peter Askin, a senior Foreign Service officer.

Rock and Weaver were the economists, and they were excellent professors. We each had to select a country. Of course, I selected Kenya. Every week, in addition to the lectures and discussion sections, we had to write a paper. The first paper was a general paper which we had to prepare before entering the program. We were asked what the prospects were for economic development in our country.

To prepare for this first paper I read a World Bank economic report on Kenya. I must have understood about 15% of its contents. By the end of the DSP I went back to that same report and was able to understand about 90% of it. That, as I was subsequently told, was the true test of whether we had benefitted from the DSP program.

I'll never forget the session when we reviewed our first papers. There were five of us in our group and Jim Weaver. It was a great group. One person was doing Egypt, another Belize, another India, and another a country in West Africa. The diversity made for very rich discussions of each others papers, which we each had to read and critique.

This was my first experience with a peer critique process. The first time I wanted to curl up under my chair and die because I was so embarrassed. By the end of the period, I was loving these sessions. Jim Weaver was a wonderful discussion leader. He challenged us to examine economic growth within the political, cultural, and social changes taking place in our countries. He stretched us.

In addition to being excellent lecturers, the DSP faculty brought in some outstanding people from the World Bank, the IMF, the UNDP and others. We also had lots of reading every week.

It was a very rigorous program. What made it very different from my prior academic experience was that it was based on real life situations that we would relate to. We had AID cases; we had other cases. I've never had such relevant academic training.

I also had an outstanding group of colleagues. We learned a great deal from one another.

I literally cried the last day of the program. I didn't want it to be over.

Q: Did you do one of the visits to a rural area or some community, as they had done in the past?

BERNBAUM: No. DSP had changed a lot. In its early years, when it was a three months program, I believe there was an off-site experience.

So, I went to Kenya primed. I arrived as someone who was familiar with the Kenya — its history, its status in terms of economic growth and structural adjustment. It gave me a great deal of confidence.

At the end of the program I said to Terry, “I never will be the same person. This has been a transformational experience. I went in an Education Officer, and I came out a person with a much broader perspective. I’m extremely grateful to you for insisting that I attend the course.”

Moved to USAID/Kenya - 1989

We arrived in Kenya in August of ’89 but we got off to a shaky start.

The Mission Director wanted Eric as his Deputy. This was Eric’s first assignment to Senior Management. He really wasn’t that interested in me. In fact, he was getting ready to fold the Human Resources Division, that I was to be in charge of, in with the private sector office and put someone else in charge. The other person, needless to say, was extremely unhappy with the decision and this got us off to a bad start.

Kenya was not an easy move for me. By that time we had both acquired very good reputations. I received many very good job offers, but I turned them down because Eric was at the point of moving into Senior Officer ranks; I think implicitly we had decided all the way along for the better or for the worse, it was Eric’s career that was probably more important, although it bothered me more as we moved up.

I went to Kenya with some fear and trepidation. Number one, was Eric’s job. Number two was good schooling for the kids. Number three was me, who, as I perceived it at the time, had landed a relatively “mediocre” job. I was in charge of the Human Resources Development Office, which was a relatively small office.

However, when I arrived in Kenya I discovered that I was being given a wonderful opportunity. I had a terrific Kenyan staff. I had a fascinating PVO co-financing project, a large participant training project that had all the benefits of the CLASP program without the political baggage. I had another management program with the Directorate of Personnel Management.

Most important was the calibre of my staff. I had 11 Kenyan Foreign Service Nationals, one U.S. Direct Hire who was my Deputy and one U.S. contractor. By this time I had become very interested in mentoring and career enhancement. I decided to make this office into my guinea pig. During my first couple of weeks I met with each of my staff from anywhere from an hour to four hours. I asked the same questions of each one. “Tell me a little bit about yourself, what you want me to know about yourself. You can start at birth, at the end of primary school, whatever, because I want to know about you outside of your work. I want to know what you like about your current job, what you don’t like, what you’d like to be doing that you are not doing, where you want to be in five years.”

I told them all I was deeply committed to career enhancement, and that I saw as a manager that half of my job was to manage the office and to make sure that resources were available on time so they could do a good job, but that my coequal priority was attending to their career enhancement. If that meant their staying in the office and in their current job, fine. If it meant moving up within the office, fine. If it meant moving out to

another office, that was fine. If it meant leaving AID, that was fine, too.

Then I told them a little about myself. I said, “I’m here and I’m learning to be a manager. This is the first time I’ve been a real manager so you’re going to have to teach me how to become a good manager. I’m going to try out a lot of skills I’ve learned in the Management Skills course but you have to help me. You have to give me feedback and let me tell you a little about my expectations.”

I put in place everything I learned in the Management Skills class. We did a vision valuing exercise. We did feed backing. We did everything I learned and it all worked!

Eric, meanwhile, was having a somewhat frustrating time as a Deputy. But I was loving my staff and my job. I was back in development.

When I was in the LAC Bureau, every day I would come in with my “to do” list. But the crises permitted me to do maybe three out of the 20 things I had planned for each day. When I arrived in Kenya, I prepared my “to do” list. I came in the first day, and no crisis. I came in the second day, no crisis. Third day, no crisis. The fourth day, I went up to the Mission Director’s Office. I said, “Steve this must be a very slow time of year?”

He said, “No, why?”

I said, “No crises.”

He looked at me with a twinkle in his eye. He said, “You don’t understand. We don’t have crises here.”

That’s when I realized, in addition to the fact that Kenya was outside the political limelight, that part of what I was seeing was a change in management style. The Assistant Administrator for the Latin America Bureau thrived on crises. If there wasn’t a crisis, he would create one to keep us “active”.

Not long after I arrived in Kenya, we received a visit from CDIE and MSI. Kenya was slated as the first Mission worldwide to produce strategic objectives for its programs. I took advantage of the arrival of the outside team to do a little “maintenance” on the portfolio I inherited. While it was a good portfolio, the log frames for each project were weak and the indicators, where they existed, were lacking.

I spent a lot of time with my staff revisiting our log frames, rethinking where we were going, and throughout the process went out of my way to use the management principles I learned at the AID management skills course I had taken two years before.

Other AID offices in Kenya thought we were nuts. “What’s going on? Marcia and her staff have so much time on their hands that they can “dream” and not implement their programs?”

While I appreciated their concern, the time invested was well worth it. Over a six month period we recrafted our log frames, came up with indicators that were much more appropriate. Two outcomes of the process were increased staff buy-in to their programs, which in most cases they had inherited. We also ended up with a much more credible tracking and reporting system.

We also developed a vision and values statement for our office, which we all took very seriously.

And most important of all, we became a “family”. I opened our weekly staff meetings to our secretaries. I arranged to have our Mission Director, who had been meeting once weekly with his direct hire staff on an office by office basis, meet with all of our staff, including the secretaries. No other office did this.

In the beginning both my staff and people in other offices thought it was strange. Over the months, the Mission Director became so accustomed to meeting on a weekly basis with all of us that one time, when he came to the weekly meeting in our office and the secretaries weren’t there, he said, “What happened? What’s wrong?”

It was a wonderful period.

I had excellent counterparts. It was my first experience in Africa. I had exposure to African tribal traditions as well as British traditions. In the two years I was there I was able to see concrete results of our PVO Co-Financing program. Both indigenous and international NGO’s participated in this program.

We also had a wonderful Participant Training program. It was just a very satisfying experience.

I went from a crisis management, highly politicized program in USAID/Washington to doing real development work with a great group of people. No crises. I actually had time to think and strategize. I was in my element.

All went well for the first eight months. And then the Mission had to prepare its five year plan, its CSP — Country Strategic Plan. The Mission was forced to limit its objectives and, in the process of cutting its objectives, removed a human resources objective that justified the existence of our office. I recall that I was not pleased about this, but, at the time, I did not appreciate the ramifications.

Several months later, the Africa Bureau underwent its first staff cut in the field. USAID/Kenya was asked to cut its U.S. Direct Hire staff by 4 from 25 to 21 within a year. It just so happened that the year in which we were to undergo the cut there was minimal staff turnover.

So instead of permitting staff to leave and simply not replacing them, as was done in several other Africa missions, AID/Kenya had to cut three staff positions.

Mine was one that was slated for cutting. Our office didn’t have a strategic objective so, in the eyes of some,

there was no necessity to have an office with an office chief. Better to take my portfolio and distribute it to other offices in the mission.

This meant that I was out and, along with myself, Eric.

We were devastated. We had just arrived in Kenya, were really enjoying the experience of being in a different area of the world, I was loving my job, and our daughters were very happy in school.

I remember when the Mission Director delivered the news that we were going to have to leave. Our daughter, Shana, who doesn't travel easily and is very shy, was in the second semester of 9th grade at the International School. Our plan was that we would stay in Kenya for four years and that she would graduate from ISK. Leah, our younger daughter, would finish 8th grade which would position us nicely to go to our next four year post from whence she would graduate.

Eric and I tried to appeal the decision. He called the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa in USAID/Washington. He called the head of the Africa Bureau Executive Office. His calls were not returned.

While we were trying to appeal the decision, we decided not to tell our daughters or anyone on the AID staff.

My staff knew something was very wrong. Up until then I had come into the office every morning with a big smile. And then suddenly that smile disappeared.

In July (we were given the news in early May) it became clear that our appeal was going unheeded. We returned to Washington for R&R and began to look for our next assignment. We received no help from the Africa Bureau. Their attitude was that they had no obligation to help us since we had come from the Latin America Bureau, even though it was through their decision that our jobs were cut. I can't tell you what a disillusioning experience that was.

One day in July, while on R&R, I was in the Africa Bureau sending a fax. I was getting ready for a meeting with the acting Assistant Administrator of the LAC Bureau. The Africa Bureau DAA, who was responsible for that decision, and the Head of the Executive Office walked by me, didn't say a word, walked into an office, came out, and walked by me again, without a word.

I followed the DAA into the outer hallway as he was preparing to return to his office on another floor. In a loud voice, he was about 20 steps ahead of me, I said, "Hi, I'm Marcia Bernbaum." He turned around with a frozen grin on his face and said, "Yes, I know who you are." And without a word of apology, nothing, he turned on his feet and walked down the hallway.

Had I not gone into the Acting Assistant Administrator's Office in the Latin America Bureau five minutes later and received a big hug, along with a "Welcome home to the Latin America Bureau family," I would have been devastated.

Q: That was pretty bad.

BERNBAUM: ...It was horrible. But it's not the only case of its kind. I've found talking to other people in the Africa Bureau that, with the exception of a chosen few, that's pretty much how the Africa Bureau handled its personnel. It was a real wake up call.

Then, John Wesley came in as Mission Director to Kenya. I was livid with him at the beginning, ready to strangle him for what I had perceived he had done. Before he came, I called and asked him "I need to know what you are going to do with my staff. I have to tell my staff tomorrow that I am going to be leaving in a year. What should I say to them about their futures? Are they going to have jobs?"

He said, "Yes, tell them they'll have jobs."

Of course, when I told my staff the next day, they were devastated. It was as though our "family" was going through a premature "divorce."

When John Wesley arrived a month later I said, "John, I assume you're going to make your decision of what you to do with my staff based strategically on where it makes sense for them to go. I would also like to make a pitch for including in that decision the consideration of where they want to go and where they are wanted. It hardly makes sense to force place them on an office director who isn't going to take the time to guide and orient them."

He promised that he would take these factors into consideration.

To his great credit, he permitted us to go through a period of analysis and reflection that resulted in my staff moving to offices that wanted them, where it made sense, and where they wanted to go.

During this process I said to the staff, "We can look at this as a cup half empty. We're being disbanded, the family is over, I'm leaving. Or we can look at it as a cup half full: we have a whole other year together. Think of all that I can do in the way of staff development and to help prepare you for that transition."

So that's what we did that last year. We had our ups and downs, but I put my heart and soul into career enhancement, staff development.

The day before I left, the last day of our office's existence, my staff had a farewell lunch for me. We made it into a ceremony. We gave each other awards for exemplifying the values we had identified for our office. I also arranged to have the Mission Director give us an award for "excellence in program implementation." By this time we had also conferred an award on the Mission Director for his integrity in helping us to make this transition.

We celebrated the demise of our office with our heads high.

I maintain very close contact with my former Kenya staff to this day. We still refer to the HRD “family.” There’s a great deal of caring. The decision I made to move into my next job in AID/Washington was taken based on the values we developed in that office. These values which we developed together had become very important to us.

On a related theme, while in Kenya the Training Resources Group, which had trained me in management a couple of years before, came to Kenya to provide their Management Skills Course. I sent three of the Foreign Service Nationals in my office that I had just promoted to be Project Managers, to the course. During the first couple days of the course apparently my staff kept raising their hands and saying, “Yes, my boss does that.”

Quite curious, the trainers decided to have lunch with my staff the fourth day of the course. He asked them, “What’s going on here? Tell me exactly what your boss is doing.”

They responded, or so I’m told, “Well, Marcia does most of the things you are teaching us.” The trainer interviewed them and then published an article in the Management Skills newsletter which went out to all Management Skills Course graduates, an article which focused on the work I had done in my office promoting the career enhancement of my foreign service national staff. I felt deeply honored. As I said before, the Kenya experience was an extraordinary experience for me both personally and professionally.

Q: Before we leave it, let’s talk a little bit about the program that you were dealing with. What was it?

BERNBAUM: One project focused on training Kenya’s leaders. It was called Training for Development. In 1963 at Independence there were between 50 and 100 black Kenyans with bachelors degrees. Bobby Kennedy came to Kenya on a whirlwind trip, linked up with a labor leader by the name of Tom Mboya, and they organized what has come to be known as the Kenya-Mboya airlift. The United States sent in two airplanes, and 400 young black Kenyans were transported to the United States to receive college degrees. Four years later, the ranks of Kenyans with college degrees swelled to nearly 500. While we didn’t have the full data, 20 years later we could tell that many of these people had moved into leadership positions.

So, before I came, the AID/Kenya Mission decided to design a follow on program to identify Kenyan leaders in the next generation, from both the public and private sectors, and send them to the United States for training. The program was very well designed. It ended up selecting leaders from a wide gamut of Kenyan society, people who were leaders or aspiring leaders. Unlike the prior group, those that went to the U.S. for training studied at the Masters or Doctoral level. A number also went on shorter trips of up to three months that were individualized to meet their needs. The program had built into it pre-departure orientation and follow-up after returning to Kenya. It was very well thought through.

Q: In a program for training for leadership, what do you train them for? Was it substantive training?

BERNBAUM: Yes. While there was definitely a home stay, Experience America element to it, most were going to the U.S. for substantive training. You had aspiring doctors, engineers, businessmen. While I was there we designed an evaluation to assess the impact of the program similar to what I had done for the Peace Scholarship program before leaving the Latin America Bureau. However, it ran into difficulties because some people in the Mission were uncomfortable with an evaluation that had the flexibility to adapt to the individual training plans of each person and with what they saw as high costs for the evaluation. It is a shame, because the testimonies we were able to obtain were impressive.

The program is now long over. It didn't continue because the funding got cut in Kenya, and this training was not attached to any specific sectors the Mission was working in. I do, however, understand that the Training for Development alumni program is going strong.

Q: What kind of criteria did you use for selection?

BERNBAUM: We looked at academic competence. We looked at leadership. We had specific criteria for assessing leadership and leadership potential. We interviewed the employer and colleagues. Based on this information we selected a subgroup who we met with one on one to interview. I would say the selection process was quite thorough.

Q: You didn't get pressure from the government to select their candidates?

BERNBAUM: No. This was a private sector program. Our counterpart, the Directorate of Personnel Management, played a very minimal role. And we never received any pressure to select people. I must say this was quite surprising. Also surprising was that the government gave us the leeway to identify and select leaders from both the public and private sectors. This could have been quite threatening to them.

The other program was patterned on a similar experience in the Philippines. It was called PVO Co-Finance. Similar to Training for Development, we worked across sectors. Part of the purpose of the program was to link international NGO's with local NGOs. While I was there, we moved the focus more and more toward indigenous NGO's of which there were many.

In the beginning we had a lot of money for this program. But then funding starting going down. We had a very rigorous selection process that drove our NGOs crazy. However, in addition to giving grants, we provided training for them in strategic planning, project monitoring and evaluation.

Q: Who were some of the outstanding ones that you worked with?

BERNBAUM: Oh, my gosh. My memory is getting so poor.

Q: Well, we can come back to this.

BERNBAUM: Yes. I'll have to come back to it. I'll have to refresh my memory.

I went out on a lot of field trips. That was the beauty of Kenya. There was time to go on field trips, as I wasn't attending to daily crises. I was very impressed. Many of the groups were religious groups, who were able to separate their religious activities from their development activities. I was impressed with the commitment of these groups to what they were doing.

One of my favorite field trips was to visit a wonderful program that the YWCA submitted for consideration. It focused on providing Kenyan women with business skills. Women, as you know, in the Africa region have a strong tradition of forming self-help groups. The YWCA was smart enough to build on these self-help groups and then design a small business development project around the groups. One of the beauties of the work I saw with NGOs is their ability to build on existing group structures as well as tribal and cultural traditions and trust networks. From my experience, NGOs that build on these existing structures are destined to be more successful than those that build from scratch.

My contribution to the PVO Co-finance project was trying to put in place a set of indicators that were more than just numbers tracking. We spent a lot of time and effort trying to develop simple, easy to track indicators. For example, if you were doing well drilling or if you were supporting small business or if you were doing child care activities, you had some overarching indicators that could be tracked and not be limited to just inputs

Q: What do you mean by co-financing?

BERNBAUM: Well, the NGOs had to provide a pretty high counterpart financing. In the case of the PVO Co-Financing project, I believe we were talking about a 40-50% counterpart.

Q: How large were the grants?

BERNBAUM: They varied from one hundred thousand dollars to five or six hundred thousand dollars. Of course, these grantees were getting money not just from us but from other European donors. It was my first experience in a country where there was money coming from so many donors. Unlike in Central America where we had a track record that went back decades, our involvement in countries like Kenya was of much more recent vintage. Our foreign aid program had a good reputation, and there was receptiveness to working with us which was very nice. With one exception, our relations with our counterparts were excellent.

The third one was with the Directorate of Personnel Management. We provided financing that permitted the Directorate of Personnel Management to organize and carry out management training programs for primarily mid-level civil servants. I had mixed feelings about this program because what we were providing was primarily budget support in the form of funds to cover per diem to hire trainers, travel to and from courses, room and board for trainees. I was often invited to open or close these courses, which gave me the opportunity to do a significant amount of traveling to different cities in Kenya where the training was offered.

Q: This was local training?

BERNBAUM: Yes and I felt that that wasn't an appropriate use of ...

Q: Civil service training or management training?

BERNBAUM: Both. Management training for civil service personnel.

I would like to take this opportunity to comment on one aspect of our stay in Kenya that was less than agreeable. The whole time we were there Eric and I were under tremendous scrutiny. This was a Mission that had many tandem couples and that was the irony. The Mission Director's wife was the Deputy Director of the REDSO Office. The Program Officer and the Executive Officer were tandems. There were about eight or nine tandems between USAID/REDSO and USAID/Nairobi. Ironically enough we have never had such a difficult assignment as a tandem.

We found, from the day we arrived, that the other tandems were looking at us very closely. There was some jealousy that I was reporting directly to the Mission Director, which meant that I, as an Office Director, had a supposed "in" with the Mission Director that nobody else did. But I had no choice because the Deputy Director was my husband and I couldn't report to him.

The second day after I arrived in Kenya, the Mission Director pulled my husband and myself into his office and said, "This is the last time the two of you are ever going to be in the same office alone with me in the same meeting." He said, "Eric, I want you to have nothing to do with Marcia's portfolio. You are not to be involved; people are afraid of what you are going to do. Not because of what you've done." The previous ambassador who had just left tried to bar my coming to Kenya because she thought it was inappropriate for me to come.

I will never forget. I'd been in Kenya about four months. There was a six month portfolio review of our Office and Eric sat like a fly on the wall in the corner because he wanted to just see what was happening in the portfolio. The Head of the Projects Office, who reported to him, went to the Mission Director afterwards and complained. He said, "I don't feel comfortable having Eric there. If I want to grill Marcia, and her staff, I would feel Eric, who writes my personnel evaluation, is watching over me."

So the Mission Director said, "Eric, you will never come to that meeting again."

It was very awkward, the whole two years we were there. That was the only downside. There were a couple of people in the Mission, who we knew were watching us like hawks. They never found anything.

When the new Mission Director came, he had his initial meetings with all of his Office Directors. When he met with me, he invited Eric to join us. I looked at him, and without thinking, I said, "Eric is not allowed to

be in this meeting.”

He said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “We have been programmed. We’re just not to be in the same room.”

His response, “I don’t have any problem with having you in the same meetings.”

However, Eric and I decided to keep things as they were, because the situation was very tense. That was our first wake up call regarding the challenges we would face of being a tandem when one or both move into senior management.

Q: ...What year was that?

BERNBAUM: 1991. We left in late May of '91.

Q: What was your next position?

Became Deputy Director/USAID Training Division - 1991

BERNBAUM: My next position was as the Deputy Director of the Training Division in the Office of Human Resources Development, which is located in the Personnel side of AID. That was a significant decision for me and an unusual career move. I took a conscious decision to go off the career path. I was offered the Deputy Directorship in the Office of South American Affairs that would have moved me into Senior Management which I eventually did. Instead, I decided to follow my heart and my values. I had become deeply committed to career enhancement and a former mentor of mine, Tony Cauterucci, had become the Head of Office of Human Resources Development.

He heard I was looking for an assignment in Washington and he called me in Kenya. He said, “I know you are very interested in career enhancement. I’ve just come in also leaving the mainstream to this job. I really want to put in place a career enhancement strategy for the Agency. I happen to have a position open as the Deputy of the Training Division. Would you be interested if the understanding is that, in that job, I would give you latitude to work on a career enhancement policy for AID?”

I thought about it long and hard. I thought about our office values. I thought about what I was deeply committed to. And against the better judgment of just about everybody — my husband, my father, the USAID/Kenya Mission — I decided to accept the job. I was in this job for two years. I had the good fortune of working for a lovely woman who permitted me to come in and be Deputy Director but spend a lot of time focusing on career enhancement. That was a real luxury for which I’m grateful.

Q: Who was that?

BERNBAUM: Lucy Sotar. During the two years I was in the training division, I really wore two hats. I was working on a career enhancement strategy for the agency which I'd like to go into here. I was also playing my Deputy function, more later on than in the beginning.

When I arrived, the Agency had made the decision — this was in the year, summer of '91 — to establish an incentives program. I think this was a Tony Cauterucci special — a way of making the Agency a kinder and gentler and more people oriented Agency. By this time AID had a core of a number of people who had taken a Senior Management course offered by the Training Resources Group and that same group had offered a mid-level management skills course to about half of the mid level employees in AID. Hence, you had a lot of people who were speaking the same language about values, about management, about incorporating the people human side into the management process.

So the incentives program was about focusing on how to reward people for good management, how to reward career enhancement, how to improve the personnel evaluation system. There were a series of working groups. I wound my way into the career enhancement group, and, then, I eventually de facto became the person that was running this group. We had in our group a cross-section of very, very fine people — Deputy Assistant Administrators, Office Directors, others from the Human Resources office.

It was one of the most exciting experiences I had while in USAID. We spent, I'd say four or five months dreaming...dreaming about what the agency would be like, if it really took career enhancement seriously, if it made it a core value, if it provided avenues for people to move up. We looked at a whole issue that I'm going to raise later at the end about how do you deal with technical people who move up in the agency because they are not rewarded as they move up. If anything, they are encouraged to move out of technical track into managerial track because they can't move up. We spent a lot of time looking at the evaluation system, how does the evaluation system support career enhancement.

One of the reasons it was so was that I had the good fortune of reconnecting for the third time with my first mentor, Tony Cauterucci but of also acquiring a new mentor, Ken Sherper. Ken was the Counselor to the Administrator, the highest career professional in the Agency.

I remember going to my first meeting with Ken feeling like very much a little person. This very distinguished fellow, balding with gray hair, came into the room. I was there in representation of another person who was off that day. Ken stole my heart when he started off by announcing that we need to be a kinder and gentler agency. At that point I said, this is my kind of person.

For the next several months, I worked closely with both Ken and Tony. It was very exciting. We interviewed people from throughout the agency — Mission Directors, technical people, Project Development Officers. There was just an aura of excitement. We were receiving presentations from groups like IBM that had just received the total quality management award. We were learning about good management in the private sector and applying it in USAID. I was with people who shared my values.

Everything went extraordinarily well up until the incentives program was produced and presented to the Administrator who I'm sorry to say, never really quite understood it and let the effort flounder. One of my biggest disillusionments while in AID was, after six months of putting heart and soul into this effort, watching it fall apart.

One of the key aspects of the Incentives Project was career enhancement and within it the importance of training. We built a budget for training and helping people move up career tracks to reflect the increased priority being given to career enhancement. However, what happened was exactly the opposite. Operating Expense money was going down and with it the Training Division received some major cuts.

So the bubble burst. A number of our programs came under close scrutiny. What pained me the most was seeing the Development Studies Program receive cuts and eventually be terminated because it was too expensive. I continue to believe this was a tremendous mistake.

Eventually the cuts hit the Management Skills and Senior Management program. Again, a terrible mistake, given all the years invested in building a cadre of people who spoke the same management language.

During the second year I was in the Training Division, most of my time was spent backstopping training programs and putting out fires. It wasn't nearly as satisfying as working on a Career Enhancement program for the Agency, the major focus of my efforts the first year in the job.

Q: Can we go back to the concept of the program that you defined. You mentioned it very quickly but maybe you could elaborate a little bit more. What was this concept that you were trying to promote before it got shot down?

BERNBAUM: The concept that we were trying to promote was that the first and foremost thing, as we learned in our readings on leadership and reviewing IBM and others, is that career enhancement or good management are not put into practice unless the leadership actively promotes it. The impetus needs to come from the top and senior management have to walk their talk.

What we were trying to do was operate at several levels. At one level, we were trying to get the Administrator and Senior Management to declare that career enhancement was important. We wanted them to reward managers for spending time helping to enhance the career of their employees. That was one thing.

The next part was helping people figure out how to do it. If you are going to reward people for supporting career enhancement, then you need to find a way to build career enhancement in as a value throughout the whole personnel/management system.

How do you do that? How do you get promotion panels to do it?

Among others, we got involved in defining career tracks within USAID. If you have a career track for

Project Development Officer or somebody who is a good technical person, what does it take to move from one level of the career ladder to the next?

One of the concerns we had was that the promotion system, and I had participated on the promotion panels a number of years before, was very much subject to the whim of the particular promotion panel. While a lot of the panels came out the same, there were no set criteria for what would be used to consider an individual for promotion from one level to the other.

We developed a series of criteria that defined the skills people should have in entry level positions, and then as they moved into middle and senior management up to Mission Director, Deputy Assistant Administrator. We got headlong into a lot of issues related to where do technical officers go once they get to an FS one level. Basically, they go nowhere or they become Senior Managers and go out of their career track, which happened to me and which was a big mistake for me in the agency.

Q: But the use the words “career enhancement” sounds a bit like just promotions. What’s the point of...?

BERNBAUM: Career enhancement for me, is making people feel good about what they are doing. For me a definition of career enhancement is that I get up every day and I go to the office because I’m looking forward to working and I’m feeling fulfilled. For me, career enhancement means, and this was a point we made, it means being content in what you’re doing. Maybe not necessarily looking to be promoted but doing your job to the fullest. It may mean taking a side step to go into another job that will help you to move up or it means going down a level to move into a new career track and move up. What it means is helping people think through how they feel about what they are doing, where they want to go and giving them the skills and ability and mentoring and encouragement, on the job training, training through courses in the Training Division, that permit them to achieve their objectives.

A lot of that is based on having the manager or the boss sit down with the employee and say, “Well, over this next year we are going to do this work plan and in this work plan you are going to manage this program and you are going to produce these results but we are going to build in these career stretch opportunities to give you exposure to things you have never done before so it can help prepare you for where you want to go next.”

The last part was training. How do you build in the training opportunities for career enhancement? As we found out, no big surprise, the Xerox’s and IBM’s that have received major awards for what they’ve done in management and career enhancement put at least three percent of their budget into training and AID’s percentage was one percent and going down.

Q: From your experience and all of our experiences, the tendency is to feel that if you don’t get promoted regularly you are a failure.

BERNBAUM: I agree.

Q: How did you address that?

BERNBAUM: How did we address that? We didn't like that. We thought that the whole promotion system didn't make sense. We couldn't change it because it's built into the Foreign Service Act. What we did try to do, by the way, was equalize the Foreign Service and Civil Service standards. It's very clear in AID, I think, even to this day, that the Civil Service people have been treated, especially by Foreign Service, as second class citizens.

But you are right, Haven, those were some of the blockades. One of the things we recommended strongly along with those working in the Incentives Committee on personnel evaluations was the 360 degree evaluations.

Q: What is a 360 degree evaluation?

BERNBAUM: The input for your evaluation is not just from your boss. You, Haven North, are writing my evaluation, but what you need to do is consult with the people I supervise. They need to give you feedback on how I am as the manager if I'm in a managerial role, you need to get feedback on my performance from my colleagues within AID, maybe my counterparts outside. 360 degrees means getting feedback from all angles, upward, downward, sideward, outside.

The year I left USAID, this system was just beginning to be applied. The whole notion of looking at the person as a whole person not just as somebody who cranks out documents, but how he or she treats people, motivates people is important — back to the kind and gentle and caring. There are some people who are deeply committed and motivated, and some you are never going to change. What we were trying to do was develop a structure which rewarded in every way through promotions, through awards, through career tracks, people who spent time nurturing and mentoring others and helping them improve.

Q: What was the reward side of this?

BERNBAUM: Within the Incentives Committee there was a group focusing on awards that was also operating parallel to us. They were coming up with a series of awards. One of the awards had to do with career enhancement.

But, as I said before, the bubble burst. A document outlining the key aspects of the Incentives Program was published and distributed throughout the agency. A lot of people were excited because we went through extensive consultation overseas, in Washington. But then the whole thing died. It just died.

Q: Was it solely a budget issue?

BERNBAUM: No. The issue went far beyond budget. I think at the senior levels, at the level of our former Administrator Roskins, there was not a full understanding. I don't think there was a really serious commitment for this incentives program. I think it was something that Tony wanted to do that he got Ken very much behind because it fit within his values and those of some of the other Assistant Administrators. However, deep down, the system rewards you for other things — dealing with political exigencies, pushing money. What we were focusing on is considered by most as “fluff.” It continues to be considered as “fluff,” even more so today.

The other part of working in the Training Division that for me as a Foreign Service officer was a real eye opener, was engaging with Civil Service employees. I remember when I came in, I asked Tony how did he like his new job as the Head of Human Resources.

He said, “It's a great job. I have wonderful staff I have a tendency to come up with 10 ideas a minute, and I depend on my staff to tell me which ones make sense and shoot down the other ones. My civil service employees are great, but they never question me.”

I had the same experience in the Training Division. As a manager I had always felt that I wasn't going to be a good manager, if people didn't question me. I introduced that philosophy within the Civil Service Training Division staff, and it was terribly threatening because that was not the environment that people had been used to operating in. It was a risk averse environment. One where you very seldom put your issues out on the table.

I remember in one meeting, my staff were horrified when I started questioning my boss in front of them. My boss was uncomfortable with me, too. I realized afterwards that while that was very natural to do with a Terry Brown or a Tony Cauterucci, who were Foreign Service Officers, that was not the way things worked in the Civil Service system.

Q: More hierarchical?

BERNBAUM: Much more hierarchical. You never questioned your boss. You do what the boss says and maybe with reason.

Q: More rigid?

BERNBAUM: Yes. I think within the Civil Service System there are probably good reasons in some cases of why this is the case. I'm not saying that you didn't have the same rigidity on the Foreign Service side. However, my experience was that the people I worked with encouraged me to question them. We all knew that ultimately they had the say, but I was expected to provide my best technical input.

It was at this point, when I started dedicating myself full time to the job of Deputy of the Training Division and when this whole career enhancement incentives thing sort of fell apart, that I realized that I was suddenly way

out dangling. I was very uncomfortable and desperate to get back into the mainstream.

Q: Before that you said you were working on some specific training courses?

BERNBAUM: No. I was the Deputy in the Training Division. I was helping with strategic planning, monitoring, playing the role of a manager, making sure that the different evaluations and project activities in training courses were carried out on time. There was no semi-annual reporting system in the Training Division or in the Personnel Office, so I was bringing some of my skills from the Foreign Service side into helping them develop accountability.

Q: Were there any courses that stood out in your mind as being particularly...?

BERNBAUM: Yes. The two that I took. The Development Studies Program, which was wonderful and the Management Skills and Senior Management courses, which was outstanding.

Q: What about some of these out placements like people going to the Center for International Affairs and Harvard or universities...?

BERNBAUM: That was part of our long-term training program. It was small. We were sending people to different universities. I spent some time, but not a lot on that. It wasn't something that I was focusing that much on.

One of the things that had become very hot when I was there was contractor certification. We spent a lot of time and were under tremendous pressure to put in place a system to certify contracting officers, which I didn't much like. A lot of my time was spent on budget battles and dealing with the bureaucracy. It was very frustrating. When the fun of the career enhancement wore off, I found out that a lot of the job I had in the Training Division was trying to fight to keep the budget up.

During that period, I realized it was time to move on. The only person who really supported me in going out of the mainstream interestingly enough was Terry Brown, who thought it was a good idea for me to do this because he supported career enhancement and knew how wonderful Ken and Tony were. But he said, "Don't stay out too long. Two years is enough."

So, at the end of my first year in the Training Division, I started looking for my next assignment.

The Latin America Bureau decided that it was time to lure me back. Aaron Williams was the Deputy Assistant Administrator, and Jim Michael was the Assistant Administrator. Two wonderful people. They basically said, "Listen. Our bureau is getting smaller and leaner but we want quality people, and we want to bring you back here for a career rather than as a body." Very different from the way we were treated in the Africa bureau. But again, we were seen as part of the LA bureau.

I was offered a very good job soon after arriving in the Training Division. It was to be the Head of the Technical Office for the Latin America. But I turned it down because I was having such a wonderful time with Ken and Tony. I did, however, I let it be known that I was ready to move at the end of two years. I was looking for a Deputy Office Directorship. I was particularly interested in the Office of Central American Affairs. It was moving me out of the technical track to become more of a Program Officer type.

I, meanwhile, had to put in my Completion Of Assignment Report regarding what my job preferences were. One day I received a call from the Head of the Asian Near East Development Resources Office asking me if I'd like to be the Deputy. This would have put me in charge of both the technical and the project development staff. It was quite a big move for me. I told the ANE Bureau that I was interested, but Aaron had asked me to please call him and let him know if I got another job offer because they definitely didn't want to lose me.

So I did and Aaron said, "Hold it. Don't do anything."

Appointed Deputy, Office of Caribbean Affairs - 1995

A week later Aaron called me. He said, "Jim and I would like you to be the Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs."

My response: "No thank you, Aaron. I want to be the Deputy in the Office of Central American Affairs."

I'll never forget Aaron's reaction. He howled over the phone. He said, "What? I'm offering you an Office Directorship and you want a Deputy Office Directorship?"

I said, "Yes, Aaron. I don't think I'm ready for that job. I've never been a Program Officer."

He said, "Oh, you're ready."

So I went running over to Ken Sherper. I asked him for career advice. By this time, I always consulted with all my mentors, and I had a collection of them. Ken told me I could do it. My husband said I was crazy not to accept an office directorship. Against my better judgment — because this was the biggest career mistake I made in AID — I accepted the job. I experienced a lot of anxiety before the job. I was very scared because I knew I was going to a very political program. This was the time when Haiti was heating up with the embargo. I wasn't comfortable in a highly political situation. I knew I was going to be stretched beyond my limits even beyond DSP dealing with big policy issues, way outside of AID, going far beyond education.

I spent a lot of time boning up and preparing for the job. The major reason I decided to take it was that I was going to go and be mentored by Jim Michael, the Assistant Administrator for the Latin America Bureau,

who I had heard wonderful things about and Aaron Williams who had been a friend for a number of years and who was Deputy Assistant Administrator.

As life would have it, and this happens all too often, by the time I got to that job, they were both gone. That was the big mistake. I entered the Office of Caribbean Affairs when the embargo was at its peak and ended up having one of the most challenging and stressful jobs I had in my life. I was in Caribbean Affairs from August of 1993 until April of '95 when I bailed out. I literally left it because I could not handle it. I'd like to use this next portion to reflect on an experience that one person — me — had in a job that was very unusual for this person and some of the lessons learned. The first is to trust your judgment. When an inner voice tells you not to jump into something that's not the right job for you, listen to it.

However, I had been identified as somebody with potential. They were giving me a big boost. The idea was I'd be Office Director, and then I'd go out as an AID Mission Director like my husband wanted to do.

In retrospect, I realize it was the wrong job for me for three reasons. First, it was a crisis management job. We had the embargo, and then we had the peaceful invasion into Haiti, and Aristide's move to Haiti. I'm not a crisis management person. I'm a strategic planner. It worked against that strength of mine. I'm not good at crisis management.

Second, it was extremely political. My father, the retired ambassador was just thrilled that I had a real job. I was dealing with the State Department, the National Security Council, the White House, CIA. This was real. For me, I was...

Q: Give us a little more background of what the situation was.

BERNBAUM: I'm going to in a moment. I want to first tell you why it wasn't a good job then I'm going to get into the situation. The second was that it was very political and I'm really a die hard developmentalist.

The third was there were few opportunities to use my people skills. People rode rough shod over one another without blinking an eye lash and that really bothered me.

Now, what was the program?

I'm going to share the program with you and then my views on the program. When I arrived in August of 1995, the AID/Haiti program had a traditional development orientation. Two very competent people — David Cohen and Jerry Bowers — were the Mission Director and Deputy, respectively. The program was doing a lot of the standard things that we were doing in the region, although with difficulties in Haiti. There was an active program in education, a major program in health, and a tremendous amount of humanitarian relief. We were feeding a million of the seven million inhabitants of the island and providing extensive health services. There was a business development program. There was a program to export mangoes to the United States as well other non-traditional exports that was doing quite well. As I recall, we were just getting

started in the area of democracy. When I came into the job they had just approved an administration of justice program. Just at that time, the embargo on Haiti was reimposed. It had been imposed before. The embargo had a devastating impact...

Q: Why the embargo?

BERNBAUM: The embargo was imposed because Raul Cedras, the head of the Military Junta who had taken over, had agreed to permit Francois Aristide to come back and then reneged. Aristide had been President. He'd been run out of the country about a year before. He was in exile in the United States. An embargo was put on Haiti. There were heavy duty negotiations. Cedras, at that time, agreed to bring Aristide back and then he reneged. The embargo was slapped back on again to get rid of Cedras and his whole group of military advisors.

That embargo killed off almost all of the commercial interchange that country had with the outside. The business sector withered on the vine. You couldn't exports goods to the U.S.. Basically it was an embargo on all transfer of industrial and other goods and commercial goods. The only goods that could come into the country were humanitarian assistance including food and health.

Under the second embargo, to show how serious we were, we upped the ante and added a fuel embargo.

I followed this with increasing horror. The fuel embargo, and the embargo in general, was in my opinion a serious mistake. Leon Furth at the White House, the Administration's expert on embargoes, summarized it very well when he said that an embargo is a very blunt instrument. Ultimately, it ends up hurting the poor people. The rich can always get what they need off the black market.

When the fuel embargo was put into effect, it put at great risk our ability to provide humanitarian assistance — food and medicines — to millions of Haiti's poor. Between December of '93 and well into '94 we were occupied putting in place a humanitarian fuel program. We got special dispensation from the U.N. to do this, and we worked with the Pan American Health Association to organize the program. Basically what happened was that, through PAHO, we arranged to ship fuel into Haiti with the proviso that it be channeled specifically to NGO's that were working in health and food dissemination.

I'll never forget when the first ship with fuel arrived under the embargo in January of 1994. We were at a Mission Director's conference in Queretaro, Mexico. We held our breath. Would Cedras permit the ship to dock and be unloaded? As it turned out he did, because it was to his advantage to have poor people being fed.

The next several months were sheer hell. Members of the U.S. NGO community and of the U.S. Congress were down the Administration's throat for the way they were handling Haiti. One of their main targets was the AID program. The CIA was also down our throat, criticizing how we were monitoring nutritional status in Haiti. The press was at our throat constantly looking for juicy stories. I had never in my life been thrown

into such a conflicted environment.

Q: Why were they so down on AID?

BERNBAUM: We were a political football. The Republicans saw this as a good opportunity to go after the Democrats. There were the pro-embargo and the contra-embargo people. Those against the embargo in the press were trying to argue that we were starving the nation's people. AID/Haiti had a tracking system that they had put in place a couple years before to monitor the impacts of their health and nutrition programs, with the focus being primarily on indicators of malnutrition indicators. The CIA kept trying to find evidence that the malnutrition indicators were going down.

In fact, they were but AID/Washington senior management did not want to permit that to become public, as it would have drastic implications for U.S. foreign policy vs-a-vs the embargo. I was in an awkward position as Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs. My values were being challenged to the extreme. I wanted to say "Let's be honest, the embargo is contributing to starvation in Haiti." However, we were under strict order not to let the Hill to know that. That was a real contradiction for me, because it went against my value of honesty.

Politicians often don't see it that way. You withhold information or you change it around to meet your needs. That was my first exposure to this kind of thing.

Over the next several months, the AID program in Haiti was basically just trying to keep that island alive and trying to get food and health services in. Everything else came to a grinding halt.

Then, in the summer of 1994, the decision was made that something had to be done to oust Cedras. The embargo wasn't doing it. So we started planning the invasion.

I found myself for the first time thrown in to dealing with the U.S. military. I remember my first trip to the Pentagon, walking into this high level meeting and seeing guys wearing white, khaki and blue and saying what's that? Some guys had one, two, three stars on their shoulders. I had no idea what they were. One of them, Wesley Clark, who is now head of the Kosovo operation, was heading up the Haiti planned invasion. I remember thinking, "What a nice looking guy."

Within USAID we got into a strategic planning exercise, which I liked, but it was very frustrating trying to plan for what would happen when we went into Haiti under different scenarios. One would be a bloody entry where lots of people were killed, another would be a peaceful entry. We tied ourselves up all summer doing planning and working with other donors. We did eventually invade, peacefully. Cedras and his group left Haiti.

Then, we moved into a whole new period. In October of 1994 Aristide returned triumphantly to Haiti. The United States government did not particularly like Aristide. As has been shown later on, he was not an

excellent leader, but he was all they had to bolster democracy. We went through a frenzy of planning programs to support his government. Because of the political exigencies, we found that lots of money was being thrown at Haiti.

That was another shock. After being very much against the embargo and relieved it was over, I saw how political decisions were being made about our USAID program at the highest levels of our land. The National Security Council very quickly got heavily involved in all programming decisions in Haiti about USAID projects. To my dismay, and I hate to say this as a U.S. citizen, but I will stand by this, the National Security Council wasn't really interested in Haiti. They weren't particularly interested in helping Haiti's poor people. It was very clear and open. Our major objective in was to keep the boat people from coming to the United States.

Why did we want to do that? Well, there was a guy by the name of Bill Clinton who was campaigning for his second presidency. He wanted to be reelected, and it would not have looked good had floods of boat people continued to stream in to Florida. That was the objective of the National Security Council for supporting USAID funding to Haiti — make Bill Clinton look good with very little interest in the poor people in Haiti.

That's when my value structure began to be violated. My values of honesty, integrity and caring were being violated every day. What I began to see was people, fine people, moving into positions of power for whom the end, in this case assuring Clinton's reelection, justified the means. I saw people making decisions for bad reasons, hiding information, treating each other absolutely terribly. Some people were very nice but many were not. This was the first time I as a woman, felt that I was being treated as a second class citizen. I found that my opinions at meetings were ignored, something I had never felt before in my career in AID. The whole thing was very discouraging.

At that time, Haiti needed everything. There was not an understanding at the high levels of our government — AID, Department of State, the National Security Council — that you just can't make these changes overnight. The pressures on the AID Mission to deliver were tremendous. The poor Mission, trying to start a large program practically from scratch and at the time with deadly reporting requirements. We were under constant fire during this period. We had a lot of U.S. NGOs looking over our shoulder to see how were we going to get the assistance out, wanting justifiably to make sure it was getting to Haiti's poor. The Hill was hammering us for constant reports on the status of Haiti and our assistance. During this period we were spending a lot of our time preparing our assistant administrator for testimony on the Hill. Congressionals, that required us to drop everything and attend to them, poured in daily. We continued to have to cope with a very curious and, at times, angry U.S. press.

The AID Mission in Haiti was justifiably very frustrated with AID Washington. Instead of helping them get the staff they needed and help implement their programs they saw us constantly after them to give us briefing information. There came a point when the Administrator, Brian Atwood, asked for a daily report on the situation in Haiti. I can't tell you how much time went into just preparing those daily reports.

Q: What were you reporting about?

BERNBAUM: What was happening politically, economically, with the AID program? How many people had been trained? What new agreement had been signed? Anything that he could feed to the Hill, to the press to show that we were doing good things in Haiti, as well as be prepared to answer questions on the status of the political situation in Haiti.

During that period, however, it wasn't just getting the AID program up and running. There was also a need to work with other donors to coordinate our assistance. This was the part that I liked. During November and December of 1994 I met on multiple occasions with the World Bank and IDB in preparation for a Consultative Group meeting in January 1995 in Paris where donors came to pledge support to the new government. The Haitian Prime Minister attended this meeting. Haiti was looking for pledges totaling five hundred million dollars. Instead they got double, one billion dollars in pledges, far more than Haiti could ever absorb.

The donors came in with good intentions. The World Bank came in willing to commit a tremendous amount of money as did the Inter-American Development Bank, the Canadians, the Germans, etc.

I played, as it turned out, a very interesting role preparing for the Consultative Group meeting. Everybody else was so busy trying to get programs started, that they had little time to do the planning for the meeting. I met weekly with my colleagues of the World Bank and IDB to do the planning.

That was a fascinating experience. I was very, very impressed with the commitment of people at the IDB and the World Bank — some of whom were former AID employees — to get their programs off and running. I was also very impressed with the dedication within AID, both in Washington and in Haiti. We had a lot of people from offices all over AID. We had daily coordinating meetings. At this time, we were into practically everything — health, education, construction, police training, everything except prisons that nobody wanted to touch which desperately needed assistance. The pressure from the National Security Council and the White House continued. Everybody had his or her pet project. They often weren't well thought.

One of the ideas was to bring Haitian businessmen to the U.S. to exchange notes with U.S. businessmen. This was something that the White House wanted Clinton to sponsor. I can't begin to tell you how much time went into planning this meeting and how crazy it was. Someone had a concept but everybody took that concept and ran off in different directions with it. Dealing with these various concepts and, in addition, with a constantly changing schedule for the President, called for an inordinate amount of planning. After all was said and done I don't think the meeting actually ever took place.

This was a pressure cooker like I had never experienced in AID.

One of the things that really shocked me was the way our government treated the donors. An undersecretary

in the Department of Commerce decided he was going to take it upon himself to track the status of donor assistance in Haiti. Without having the authority to do this he started a monitoring system that forced not only the U.S. government but the multilateral donors to keep detailed records of the status of their support for Haiti. I can tell you that the donors, and justifiably, didn't like this at all as he had no right to demand anything from them. But, I guess this is one of many examples of what happens in a crisis when power goes to one's head.

Q: From the Department of Commerce? How unusual?

BERNBAUM: I fought it tooth and nail. I was embarrassed. I can't tell you how many times I went back to my counterparts at the World Bank and IDB and apologized for the arrogant behavior on the part of people at Treasury and Commerce. It was very embarrassing.

Q: The Department of Commerce person must have had other interests than just being part of the Department of Commerce?

BERNBAUM: I can't say. My impression is that you had, in this case, a person whose power had gone to his head.

In any case, by January, after I went to the Consultative Group meeting, I decided I couldn't take it any more. I realized it was time for me to leave that job. It was not the right job for me. I was operating against my strengths — strategic planning, people management, development — and I decided it was time for me to get out.

Q: What was happening on the ground? Anything?

BERNBAUM: When I left the job in April of 1995, there were a lot of valiant attempts to get programs off and running. My understanding is that Haiti is doing extremely poorly. The program still is political, although the visibility has gone down. The ability to implement programs on the ground has been very difficult because of limited infrastructure, a limited human resource base, and inordinately high expectations.

I'm sure there have been some success stories.

When I was at the Washington Office on Latin America two weeks ago, I chanced upon a report on the police training program. It didn't look promising.

Q: What is your understanding of the problem of Haiti?

BERNBAUM: I wish I could tell you. If I could give you that answer, I deserve a house full of gold. My pet theory, and it goes into my interest and the whole area of social capital, is that you have a history of a portion of island that has been through strife for hundreds of years and where there is very limited trust. Haiti

is a country which has some marvelous people — very highly educated — but also lot of people who are illiterate. You have a country where you have had violence for many years and a lack of trust.

One of the many reasons why Haiti is having such difficulty because there's been such a history of violence. There is a tradition of not trusting your neighbor, after all, they might be reporting you. Haiti is also a desperately resource poor island. Then on top of that, we — the U.S. government and others who supported the embargo — wiped out whatever business sector existed in Haiti — the maquila industry, non-traditional exports to the U.S. All of that fell apart with the embargo, and, to my knowledge, people don't want to go back in to Haiti and invest until they were confident of the investment climate.

Q: Let me ask you did you have any problems with the rest of the Caribbean area?

BERNBAUM: Yes. I came into the office at six in the morning and I left at eight at night. My other countries who began as second class citizens became third class citizens. Between the hours of six and eight in the morning before all hell broke loose on Haiti, I attended to my other Missions. I started doing things — and that was one thing that frustrated me was I had no time to deal with these other Missions who desperately needed our backstop support. All of our energies went into Haiti and that was very frustrating. So, yes that's what I had...

Q: What were the other Missions?

BERNBAUM: We had programs in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Belize, the Regional Development Office for the Caribbean and Guyana. What else was happening during that period that made life equally difficult was that as the budget levels went up for Haiti, and the budget levels for the Latin America bureau went down, other countries in the Caribbean got cut very badly. Certain other countries that were pet favorites of certain organizations and groups and individuals who I won't mention, like El Salvador continued to get receive a lot of support as did Peru due to drugs.

A decision was made while I was in Caribbean Affairs, to phase out the Belize program and the program in Regional Office for Caribbean. The way in which it was done created major angst.

Q: Why was it painful?

BERNBAUM: Among others, Washington kept changing its signals in terms of timing and funding for the close out. The Mission Director in the Regional Office for the Caribbean had six island Prime Ministers that she kept having to go back to every time we cut funds and make the close out sooner and sooner. Needless to say, this made the Prime Ministers very unhappy.

This was the post-Reagan era. A number of our programs in the Eastern Caribbean were focused on structural adjustment, economic reform, and the Clinton administration was more interested in basic needs. Therefore, these programs fell by the wayside. In truth the Eastern Caribbean and Jamaica, and even the

Dominican Republic don't have the severe, low GDP growth rate and per capita GNP rates that you have in the Honduras' and Bolivia's. With the exception of Haiti, support for that region went down.

I might add that the other thing that we spent our time on in the peak of the flurry on Haiti was Cuba. As if I and my office didn't have enough to do, all of a sudden there was pressure from the Hill to start preparing for a strategy for possibly entry into Cuba. If Haiti was walking on eggshells, Cuba was even more delicate.

I'll never forget trying to figure out how we could handle both of these crises countries. It was exhausting.

Q: On Cuba?

BERNBAUM: On Cuba. Legislation would have called for the Administration preparing for a contingency plan for what we should do in Cuba, should Castro leave.

Q: What would we do?

BERNBAUM: We were just beginning to work on this when I left so I can't tell you.

Q: After your Caribbean experience, what did you do?

Joined the USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation - 1995

BERNBAUM: This one sort of happened. This was a very unusual type of job situation to come up in the way it did. I had just returned from the Consultative Group meeting in Paris in January of 1995 where I accompanied the Haiti Mission Director and the Assistant Administrator for Latin America.

Coming back on the airplane I decided it was time for me to leave the Latin America Bureau. At the same time I decided that, as the Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs, I needed to do a better job of networking with the Global Bureau so I asked my secretary to set up appointments with two of the Deputy Assistant Administrators in the Global Bureau. One was Chuck Costello, who was in charge of democracy, and the other was Janet Ballantyne, who was in charge of economic growth.

That week after I came back, I had luncheon dates with both. I had lunch with Janet at the Foreign Service Club. I went to discuss how we could work together from the perspective of my job in Caribbean affairs. But low and behold, by sheer coincidence, the day before our luncheon she had been asked by Atwood to return to the Center for Development Information, CDIE, to be its director.

During our lunch I shared with Janet some of my trials and tribulations working in Caribbean affairs. I also told her how interested I was in the evaluation function. I wasn't really looking for a job at CDIE but did

offer, from my vantage point at Caribbean Affairs, to be of assistance if I could.

She said, “I have a better idea. You’re not happy in your job. I’ve been told I have complete leeway to revamp CDIE and bring in whoever I want and take out anybody I want. So how about if you come over to CDIE? I’ll create a job for you, around your interests and talents.”

How often does that happen in one’s career? Janet is a very engaging person. She and I seemed to see eye to eye. All of my dreams over the years flooded back, my interest in evaluations, in sharing experiences, in learning from our past. I said, “Well this is my opportunity to do something where I can make a difference, where I know I have the skills. It is also something I passionately believe in, as was the case with career enhancement.” Haven, you had been responsible for establishing CDIE. You also had a hand in establishing the Research and Reference Service. CDIE was doing evaluations but they weren’t really getting out and being used. I am deeply committed to dissemination of good practices.

I said, “I’m going to come in to help you with dissemination, Janet. I’m going to have two objectives in my job. I’m going to help make sure that the evaluations that CDIE does meet the needs of senior managers, in particular, but also mid-level managers. I also want to work with Jill Buckley, the Head of Legislative and Public Affairs, to get word out to the Hill and to other constituencies about what we are doing.”

Janet was delighted. Before I went into the job, she and I had lunch with Jill Buckley to plan the dissemination outside of the Agency. I was given free reign to develop my scope of work and set out what I wanted to do. I was very excited. This was the second time I left the mainstream, which, as I was told later by the Head of Personnel, was basically my downfall, if I ever wanted to move up to be a Mission Director.

I moved into the job. I developed my scope of work. There was the implicit understanding with both Janet Ballantyne and the Deputy Administrator, Carol Lancaster — who also called to urge me to take the job — that there was a good chance at the point at which Janet moved on that I would become CDIE Director. In truth, I had left a Senior Management position in Caribbean to go into this other job with the notion that within a year or two I would either move into the Directorship of CDIE or move on to become an Office Director or Deputy Assistant Administrator elsewhere.

I took the challenge. The Agency, under Reengineering, was presumably encouraging these kinds of moves. I was given tremendous leeway to exercise my creativity and initiative, to reconnect with some of my technical evaluation skills, to try out dissemination. It was lovely. I feel very proud of the number of the things I did while I was there.

Q: Let’s go into them.

BERNBAUM: All right. Well, CDIE is structured into three divisions. There is the POA division, which is in charge of evaluations. There is the PME division which is very important because it does the agency’s strategic planning and results reporting. The work of this division assumed increasing importance when I was

there, with the advent of the Government Performance and Results Act. And, then, there was the division that had responsibility for the Agency memory, base, the Research and Reference Service, and the Development Information Clearinghouse which was responsible for making documents available to USAID employees and the public. I reported directly to the Director of CDIE and I was in charge of dissemination and linkage with senior management.

I think that the key reason that Janet brought me in was I had very good relations with a number of senior managers in the Agency. One of the first things that I did was create a CDIE senior management advisory committee. To establish the committee I carried out a customer service survey. I interviewed about 50 senior managers in the agency. This included most of the Deputy Assistant Administrators, about a dozen Mission Directors, and a number of Office Directors in Washington. I interviewed five or six Assistant Administrators including Larry Byrne, Jill Buckley, and Mark Schneider. I eventually interviewed Brian Atwood. It was a very good interview. He was very excited about the survey.

I was interested in the interviews, first and foremost, in finding out what these senior managers know about what CDIE did. I would share with them a list of our products and services and ask which of these services they knew about and which they didn't. Of those that they knew about, what did they think of them? If they had received services from the Research and Reference service or if they had received any CDIE evaluations, what did they think of them? I asked them what was the best way to get information to them. They are busy managers. How can we get information to them in a way that they can use it to make management decisions and what kind of information did they need?

Q: What are some of the principal findings?

BERNBAUM: One of the principal findings was that senior managers — and you should feel very proud of this Haven — were very high on the Research and Reference service which you played a major role in establishing. This group — under contract with the Academy for Educational Development — is there the moment you need assistance, be it in project design, implementation of evaluation. They can dig into the Agency's memory bank to get information on lessons learned from past experiences; contact the World Bank or the IDB to find out what they are doing (and lessons learned) in a specific area of interest. This program, which is very responsive to users needs and provides quick turnaround assistance, is seen very positively throughout the Agency.

Another service provided by CDIE that was highly thought of, carried out under contract to Management Systems International, helps Missions to prepare their strategic plans and strategic objectives. Again, as it is service oriented and designed to meet the needs of specific clients, it was very well regarded.

To the surprise of a lot of us, we found through the survey that a number of senior managers were reading with great interest the program evaluation reports coming out of CDIE. We had assumed that senior managers only had time to read a one to two page summary of this report. But this was not what we found. We found that what senior managers particularly liked was a 10-12 pager, which provided a one page

summary up front and then gave them the option, if they were interested, of reading a longer summary that came behind it. This really helped us in the design of our subsequent evaluation reports.

The other thing that came out of the senior management survey was that Mission Directors, in a number of instances, were not receiving the evaluations because, when they were mailed to AID missions, they were channeled through the Communications and Records Office and often got shunted to somebody else in the mission. One of the Mission Directors, Elena Brineman, had a wonderful idea: instead of sending a written report, periodically send an e-mail announcing the existence of the evaluation reports, providing a short summary, and then giving readers the option of either ordering it electronically or in paper. Other senior managers liked this idea so much that we generated CDIE Connection which, I understand, still exists. It goes out once a month or when merited. A follow-up survey we did, just before I left USAID, found that people really liked it. They could get the documents quickly (most preferred to order them electronically), and it reduced the need to produce unnecessary paper.

Another recommendation that came out of the survey was that CDIE form a senior management advisory committee. The committee was composed primarily by the individuals who participated in the customer service survey and who had an interest in participating. We did not have regular meetings. Rather, I kept in touch with them via e-mail, consulting as appropriate with specific members of the committee when issues arose where we wanted their assistance, asking members of the committee to review drafts of evaluations, and so on. I also sent periodic e-mails providing them with updates on what CDIE was doing. While it didn't last long as I got RIFed a few months later, the committee, by all accounts, was off to an excellent start...

We also did something else while I was at CDIE. Janet Ballantyne reinstated an impact evaluation series, modeled on a similar evaluation series that was initiated when she was in CDIE in the late 1980s. The idea was to produce shorter, punchier, more readable evaluations that came out on a timely basis. I was involved both in one of the evaluations (as team leader for one of the evaluations we did on legislative strengthening programs in Bolivia) and in assessing customer preferences on format, length, and style of the evaluations.

It was a lot of fun and produced wonderful results. We identified the key audiences for the evaluations — senior managers, technical people in the area of focus of the evaluation, and generalists — and I asked representatives of each to review three draft reports, each following a different style. Among the senior managers I was able to get two Assistant Administrators, three Deputy Assistant Administrators and several Mission Directors to participate.

I was frankly amazed at the response. Busy people such as Chuck Costello who was the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Democratic Programs in the Global Bureau, Norma Parker (DAA for the LAC Bureau), and Margaret Carpenter (A for the Asia/Near East Bureau) took several hours out to review and comment on the evaluations. And thanks to the collective feedback of everyone who came back to us, we produced a format and style which brought CDIE high praise later on when the evaluations were circulated.

The experience also confirmed my hypothesis: that when people are interested, and they know you will do something useful with their feedback, they'll take the time. It also helped that they knew and trusted me.

Q: What did they conclude?

BERNBAUM: They concluded that a style that was more traditional but written in more of a story format worked best for them. They gave us some very good suggestions for formatting that are being used to this day. Just at the point that I was RIFed, I was preparing to go out to Agency personnel to see what they thought of the new evaluation format, whether they read the evaluations and were using them. Unfortunately, that never happened after I left.

The last thing I was working on, and initiating just as I got RIFed, was improving dissemination of CDIE's products outside of USAID. I had the interest of Jill Buckley and her staff at the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs. Unfortunately, however, this initiative never got off the ground.

Oh yes, I forgot the work I did on the Agency's Strategic Plan. It was being finalized when I joined USAID. There was nobody to work on education indicators for the strategic plan. I had been out of the education field for several years. However, before I knew it I found myself leading this exercise and in the process, discovering that I was by that time the most senior education person in the Agency. That is how badly the education backstop had deteriorated over the years. Most of my education colleagues who were highly competent people had moved on into other senior management roles.

So I reassumed my education hat and went to work on strategic planning. In addition to guiding a process leading up to the selection of indicators I spearheaded the effort to prepare the chapter on education accomplishments for the 1996 Strategic Plan report that went to Congress.

Q: On the strategic plan, what were the elements of that that you were working on and what were they trying to do?

BERNBAUM: Actually strategic planning, and I should say reengineering, because I was heavily involved in that as a sideline as well. When I came to CDIE, the basics of the Agency's strategic plan had been put together and there was a lot of angst within CDIE on the part of competent Foreign Service Officers like Scott Smith, that if not used well, this Strategic Plan could become a straight jacket. What we were trying to do was be responsive to the Government Performance and Results Act put in by Al Gore which dictated that each agency by, I think this year, be reporting on its accomplishments.

Our objective was take the Agency's goal areas in the agency and come up with a limited number of indicators that we could track. It's kind of a contradiction in terms. If you are a doctor and you are diagnosing a patient, you don't use one test, you use a variety of tests. If you are working in a widget factory, you can probably count widgets and how many you make. As we know in development, when you are working in agriculture or health or education or, God forbid, democracy, you are doing so many different

things that when you get to the point of trying to get to some indicators that exemplify everything you are doing in that sector, you've gotten to such a level of generality, and so beyond what is within your manageable interest, that what you come up with lacks meaning. My concern, which I expressed to the Administrator after I left the Agency, was that the notion of the strategic plan was a good one, but people didn't know how to collect the indicators information. The indicators were set too high, and there was a rigidity built into the system.

What I was trying to do, again when I left the agency, was to get USAID missions, as they prepared their strategies, to review and comment on the Agency Strategic Plan and, in so doing, recommend adjustments. I'm not sure what happened on that score after I left the Agency.

The other thing that we were doing in CDIE as part of reengineering was revamping the whole agency monitoring and evaluation system.

Q: On the strategic plan, what about the content of it?

BERNBAUM: It had a variety of goal areas — among them economic development, health and population, democracy, and humanitarian assistance. Under each goal were specific objectives. Education was a specific objective under the economic development goal.

In the education sector, our instructions were come up with two or three indicators that showed what we were accomplishing as an Agency. Having a limited, and somewhat artificial set of indicators at a high level of generality, presents the risk that USAID Missions designing their programs to meet those indicators and, in so doing, distort their programs.

Q: You make it sound like the strategic plan is dominated by the selection of indicators?

BERNBAUM: That's correct.

Q: There should be a lot more than that I would assume?

BERNBAUM: Yes, but we were spending so much time on indicators which began to drive everything. That became the major focus of the R4 (Results Review/Resources Request) reporting that came in from the field. The indicators began to drive a lot of the decisions made in Washington about rewarding Missions as to Missions that were meeting indicators or not. There was a lot of confusion about how you measure these indicators, how you standardize them across countries — if you're all going to be doing the same thing in different countries, shouldn't you measure them in the same way? There was a pressure, on the one hand, to standardize and, on the other hand, to give Missions the latitude and the flexibility to do the programming they needed. That was very hard.

Q: In the education area what were the substantive interests that the strategic plan was focusing on?

What was the strategy?

BERNBAUM: The focus was on basic education. Education, at that point, was not a goal. It was under the economic growth objective. Our key interest was improving the quality and access to basic education and within that a focus on girls education. We had, for example, one level of indicators where we attempted to look at things like enrollments, primary completion rates, and achievement results. At the next level, we had indicators focusing on policies, institutional structures, and school systems. A lot of good energy went in from throughout the agency to developing these indicators, and I give full credit to AID professionals within and outside CDIE for their input. However, again, any instrument that isn't constantly updated and changed and questioned can become a straight jacket.

Q: Did you agree with the substantive aspects of the education strategy?

BERNBAUM: Substantively yes.

Q: Point the focus where?

BERNBAUM: By this time, education was on a downhill turn. There was relatively little interest and money left for education. Most of the money for education was in the Africa Bureau where Congressional earmarks dictated that the Agency support basic education. It, therefore, made sense to focus on basic education in the strategic plan.

Q: What about the rest of the world?

BERNBAUM: The rest of the world, if you looked outside of Africa, was primarily Latin America. By that time Asia Near East Bureau wasn't doing anything in basic education nor was the bureau for former Soviet Union. It was the Africa bureau and Latin America primarily with a few exceptions.

Q: Women's education was not...?

BERNBAUM: There were some isolated initiatives in girls education in Asia and in the Near East. However, if you looked at where the bulk of resources were going in education, it was Africa, followed by Latin America.

Q: You mentioned this R4 system. What was it and what did you think about it?

Views of USAID's reengineering and R4 system

BERNBAUM: That was part of the whole reengineering. So the question is what did I think of reengineering. Can I broaden it?

Q: Okay.

BERNBAUM: Every few years its time to go back and look at our systems and critique them. We're never satisfied with them. We always must improve them. We had a new administration. We had an Assistant Administrator for Management, who came in with the assumption, without looking at anything we'd done, that everything we'd done in the past was wrong so we needed a new system and what we needed to do is what the private sector was doing.

A tremendous amount of energy went into reengineering, getting rid of all the old and putting in the new. As our current Assistant Administrator for Management and my mentor, Terry Brown, reflected: before you would go overseas and it was like visiting your local Holiday Inn. You knew what your bedding would look like and what color your covers would be. You had a Mission Director and a Deputy and a program and a projects office and your technical offices. You had a project paper and a logical framework matrix and a whole process that you went through.

Reengineering questioned all of that and threw out the baby with the bath water which I think was a mistake. They, then, proceeded to put in place what was to have been a much more flexible system.

There were a couple of problems with that. First of all, in order to put in place a flexible system of this type, you need the expertise to do it. This was happening just when the agency was losing a lot of its senior people and with it its memory as well as its capability at the mid-level. I remember, after leaving USAID, being asked to design the equivalent of a project paper. It was called a results framework. I was reading the guidance for preparing a results framework in the airplane as I was heading to the Dominican Republic. I said "Oh, this basically tells me that I can write anything I want to write as long as I produce results!" The key thing was results, and how you get there is your business.

That was probably okay for people like me because I had enough years experience that I knew how to design and write the document. However, this lack of structure was not helpful for others. It produced tremendous confusion.

The whole evaluation system — monitoring and evaluation system — was changed. No longer were you doing mid-term and final evaluations of projects as you always had done, which by the way wasn't bad for me because a lot of the evaluation in the Agency had become pro forma. The idea was that you would do evaluations when you needed them. This coincided with the time at which the Agency training budget was beginning to go. What you needed was a massive retraining at the Agency to do something they weren't quite sure about to begin with. There wasn't even the capability of the money to do it so the system sank under its weight. I think the Agency is suffering...

Q: What is the difference between the R4 system and the traditional system?

BERNBAUM: The Action Plan was replaced by the R4 document. It's a bit hazy, but I think the major

difference with the R4 was that the focus was on results as opposed to the means for achieving results which was more the focus of the Action Plan.

Q: Weren't we interested in results before?

BERNBAUM: Of course, but in a different way.

Q: What's the difference?

BERNBAUM: Under the R4 and Agency Strategic Plan we were trying to come up with measurable indicators of results that focused on higher level results as opposed to intermediate results and inputs which was most characteristic of the Action Plan process.

Q: So it was a higher level?

BERNBAUM: Right. We were basically going to those goal level indicators which we always had in our project papers which were things we wanted to strive toward but what we really wanted to focus on what was within our manageable. In the Action Plans, the focus was on what is in our manageable interest. What can we accomplish in a country in the health sector, education sector? Under the R4 process the focus on results within the Agency's manageable interest started getting downplayed and Missions started getting rewarded for achieving indicators at higher levels. What we ended up doing under reengineering was taking credit for what everybody was doing. If you were going to work to decrease birth rates in a country under a population program, it was no longer just what was AID doing, but what was the World Bank doing, and what was various other donors and groups doing. Ultimately we were accountable, and yet we weren't accountable.

Q: Were we taking credit for the results?

BERNBAUM: We were taking credit for the results, but then presumably when we didn't achieve those results we were supposed to be able to say, "oh dear, this hurricane that happened here or this disaster there, the World Bank program didn't come through, therefore, that's why we didn't achieve our results." Unfortunately, the green eye shades bureaucrats in the regional bureaus who were doing the bean counting, didn't quite see it that way. So when a Mission didn't achieve its targets, it often had it taken against them.

Q: Where does the developing country fit into this? Doesn't sound like it is involved?

BERNBAUM: Oh, no, no. Under reengineering you are supposed to go through a whole customer satisfaction process. Missions are supposed to talk about how they developed their strategies in close consultation with all of their stakeholders — governments, NGOs, contractors. A number of Missions took that very, very seriously and we were delighted. That was a positive side of reengineering. The problem again was when it came to Washington, after the Mission had spent lengthy months negotiating a strategy,

as opposed to the R4 which is a reporting document, what they had agreed to do in education or health and they had all the parties bought in, we bureaucrats in Washington would start questioning where they were coming from and, in so doing, undercut them. It was very frustrating. Presumably AID/Washington is supposed to be delegating to the field and letting the field use its expertise to come up with its program. But the field was losing its technical expertise at the same time Washington was under increased political pressure including pressure to produce results. What we started having was a curious situation where we spoke out of one side of our mouth but acted through the other. It gets back to be the contradiction in values. I think it's been very unhealthy, because people have been forced to operate contrary to what they've been asked to do.

Q: How do you budget in a system like that?

BERNBAUM: The budgeting. That was another fascinating part. The Latin America Bureau, which I can tell you about, took the budgeting process very seriously. They came up with a formula. You got certain points for achieving or partially achieving your objectives. I remember going through the AID/El Salvador R4 (programming system). They had said they were going to reduce birth rates by "X" and they surpassed their target so they got extra points. If they didn't make their target, points would be taken away from them. These ultimate point counts for AID/El Salvador presumably figures into the LAC Bureau budget allocation process. This encouraged the El Salvador's to reduce their targets so that they would exceed them. However, when they reduced their targets, they were criticized for having targets that were too low.

Q: Did you get more money if you exceeded your target?

BERNBAUM: Well, that was the idea. The Bureau that took this the most seriously was the Asian/ Near East bureau. They did the best in terms of achieving targets and results reporting. However, when it came time for allocating the Agency budget among Bureaus they were the one that was hit the hardest. Why? Because ultimately what drives the Agency's budget allocation process was and continues to be the political imperatives — what was happening in Haiti, the war in Kosovo.

Q: Well, let's touch on another dimension of your CDIE experience. Were you involved in any evaluations?

BERNBAUM: I went out on one, an evaluation of USAID support for legislative strengthening in Bolivia. I had a wonderful time.

Evaluation of legislative strengthening

Q: How was that experience?

BERNBAUM: I knew nothing about legislative strengthening, but I was told not to worry. In these impact evaluations we are not supposed to be experts. Our team did a fairly credible job. It was not an expert

evaluation. I ended up meeting with the acting President of the country along with key people in the Bolivian legislature who were involved in a legislative strengthening commission that USAID was supporting. We were quite impressed with what the Mission was doing to support the Bolivian legislature. It was always a pleasure during these years in Washington to go to the field where the real work was taking place and people were actually spending time doing substance. It was a great experience, and I've done many evaluations since.

Q: What did you think about the evaluations that were being done, even if you weren't personally involved. What kind of evaluations are we talking about?

BERNBAUM: Again, evaluations have gone through so many cycles. You know them better than I do. At that point, Janet had concluded that the evaluation system had become fairly moribund, that evaluations were being done in CDIE with very little input from technical people and senior managers so there was very little ownership for them. They weren't really focused on a lot of what the key needs were in the field, and they were taking much, much too long — years to do.

The impact evaluation instituted by Janet was an attempt to get back to what was an older style of getting senior managers directly involved on teams. The idea was quick turn around, not to necessarily make them highly technical, but good impressionistic pieces. If that was the objective, I think our legislative strengthening evaluations were doing a fairly nice job. However, the reality was we were not able to get senior managers to join us on those teams with the exception of my husband who, when he was Deputy Assistant Administrator in the LAC Bureau, was on the team that evaluated USAID support for legislative strengthening in El Salvador. I think Chuck Costello, then the Head of the Democracy Office in the Global Bureau, eventually went on another.

Q: Where was the Administrator in this?

BERNBAUM: He was very supportive. We regularly went to brief him and his senior management on the outcomes of our evaluations at the Administrator's senior management meeting. I did a briefing on the customer service survey. Brian was and continues to be a strong supporter of CDIE. He believes in evaluations. Very much to his credit when there were evaluations that were not positive and that Congress might not like, he had them go out anyway. He became a strong user of the strategic framework stuff. Yes, we had strong support from the Administrator.

Q: Were there any evaluations — not ones you were involved in — that you observed that you thought were particularly significant during that time?

BERNBAUM: There were a couple in the democracy area that provided a lot of good food for thought.

Q: Good. Well, any other dimension of your CDIE period?

BERNBAUM: Yes. The decline of CDIE was disturbing. Ronald Roskins also gave a lot of emphasis to evaluation and in the late '80s, beefed up the budget tremendously in CDIE and gave authorization for the establishment of many senior positions. He authorized the creation of a number of GS-14 and 15 and created several Senior Foreign Service positions. By the time I got to CDIE in '95, CDIE was increasingly becoming a place where one stuck people who didn't work well in other areas of PPC. I hate to say it. It was beginning to become a dumping ground. You had people sitting there in GS-14 and 15 positions that didn't belong there. One guy used to come and read his newspaper all day long. I think he still does. Nothing could be done to remove them. While I was there they force placed a couple of people that didn't have the qualifications into CDIE while other people would have wanted to come in were not given the opportunity.

Q: Any other observations?

BERNBAUM: I was frustrated when I left CDIE that there were no provisions put in place to provide continuity to some of the initiatives that I began while I was there. The CDIE senior management advisory committee died out after I left. I can't tell you how many senior managers I have bumped into since have told me how disappointed they were that this committee stopped functioning. They were really enjoying being a part of it.

Q: Well, you left CDIE for retirement?

Retirement from USAID and the RIF - 1996

BERNBAUM: I left CDIE for retirement, not by my choice. Actually, before I joined CDIE, I had decided it was time for me to leave USAID. My husband and I were both senior level. It was no longer so easy for us to move to the field.

Eric had received a couple offers as Mission Director. It was not a good idea for me to be assigned, as a USAID employee, to a Mission that he headed. There was no space for the two of us in a Mission, given that we were both Senior Foreign Service Officers and I was not about to go down three notches as well as be in the awkward situation of receiving special scrutiny as the wife of the Mission Director. That would have been hard for both of us. I decided it was time for me to move on. I had decided over the years in AID that while I didn't enter committed to development, I have become deeply committed to development be it overseas or in my own country. I was really interested in working with NGOs, and I wanted to use some of my skills in strategic planning, organizational development, and evaluation to support NGOs.

CDIE was marvelous for me; it couldn't have provided a better stepping stone for leaving the Agency. While at CDIE I got to reconnect with the education sector. I got to begin implementing some of my dreams concerning dissemination and evaluation. What I didn't realize was how I would leave the Agency.

In June of 1996, my husband was asked by Brian Atwood to be Mission Director to Peru leaving for Peru the following summer. The idea was that I would stay at CDIE until his transfer in June of 1997 and then go

on leave without pay until I turned 50 in November of 1998..

However, my move to CDIE in a non-senior management position left me vulnerable. In the Spring of 1996, the Agency was in the throes of difficulties with budget cuts and a new computer based financial system (NMS) that was running into terrible troubles. It suddenly became apparent that a lot more money was needed to develop this system than was anticipated. I may not have the full story here, but my understanding was that this spurred the decision to have a Reduction in Force with the idea that money saved on staff salaries could be put into completing implementation of the NMS. The decision was made to RIF 200 people — 100 Foreign Service and 100 Civil Service. On the Civil Service the decision was made to target lower level Civil Servants, primarily secretaries. On the Foreign Service side, for a number of reasons of which I can conjecture, the decision was made to target senior Foreign Service officers.

I should mention that when I moved to the Office of Caribbean Affairs, in addition to becoming a Senior Manager, I was promoted to the Senior Foreign Service which was quite a surprise and very welcome. One of the decisions to RIF the senior people was we were earning high salaries. Senior Foreign Service officers who were in Mission Director, Deputy Director and Office Director positions in Washington were protected from the RIF. This made those of us who were not in protected positions (I had moved out of a protected position in the LAC Bureau to come to CDIE) particularly vulnerable.

So my reward for getting promoted to the Senior Foreign Service was being RIFed. I was younger in my backstop than most of the other senior managers, and I had more years in Washington. Together, this affected my point count. When it came time for the RIF, I was particularly vulnerable in my backstop.

The RIF, while anticipated, was a horrible shock to me personally; also to the Agency. Had I not been RIFed, I would have stayed in CDIE for a year. By that time I would have completed 20 years in the agency, and then I would have accompanied my husband to Peru, but I would have gone on a leave of absence for a year and a half, let the clock tick until I turned 50, and retired. The RIF was a very awkward way to leave.

While I didn't like it, the RIF turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me. I was RIFed in June. I got the RIF notice in June of 1996. September 25, 1996 was my last day.

Q: Well, we'll come back to the general experience but after you left, you've taken on a number of consulting jobs.

BERNBAUM: Right.

Q: What are the more interesting ones of those?

Assignments as a consultant and a volunteer - 1996-present

BERNBAUM: When I left the Agency, my husband was getting ready to go to Peru. I guess I had the notion that I would eventually get another “job” because I’d been used to having a nine to five job. I was to be in Washington for nine months waiting for my younger daughter to graduate from high school before joining Eric in Peru, so finding a “job” was not very likely. I decided to do short term consulting and reconnect with the education field while at the same time branching out into working with NGOs in civil society, whatever that was.

When I left USAID absolutely terrified, I had one consulting job lined up, and I didn’t know what was going to happen to the rest of my life. I found to my surprise that I had no problems getting work. I started primarily with USAID consulting. However, I now do little work with USAID.

My first consulting assignment was an evaluation of a civil society strengthening program in the Dominican Republic, which was very exciting. I was also contracted along with others to prepare a strategic framework for basic education in Africa which involved interviewing people at high levels at USAID, the World Bank, and other donors. During that 10 month interval I was also contracted by UNICEF to prepare an issues paper on the linkages between child labor and education for a major meeting in Norway on child labor. Right after Eric died, seven months after I was RIFed, I did an evaluation of a program in the Dominican Republic where businessmen played an important role in guiding educational reform. I also did a major evaluation for CDIE as part of its impact series on girls education in Malawi. I also did other consultancies with the USAID Missions in Ecuador and Honduras.

However, since last June, by my personal choice, I stopped doing consulting for pay. I had decided a long time ago that I was committed to development in my own country and I am currently, pro bono, doing three consulting jobs that are giving me tremendous satisfaction, linking me to development in my own country. I am currently working with the Jewish Social Services Agency in Montgomery County Metropolitan area helping them to come up with an approach for measuring outcomes with their social skills. I’m also working with a group of psychologists connected to the American Psychological Association. I am moderating an Internet discussion group with psychologists around the world in societies in conflict/emerging from conflict focusing on the role that psychologists can play in dealing with human rights violations. I will doing a progress report at the next annual American Psychological Associations meeting being held this coming August in Boston. I am currently also working with Georgetown University Law School doing an impact evaluation of a family literacy program being run in DC prisons.

While in CDIE, I became deeply concerned with the overemphasis on quantification in results reporting and the need to get at better measures for measuring impact, especially in the area of civil society where the major focus of USAID’s work is on nurturing and empowering leaders.

The family literacy program which connects prisoners to their children through books is providing me with an excellent opportunity to try out a methodology for assessing impact that I’ve wanted to try out for years. Specifically, I am assessing the impact of this program after the fact on the prisoners themselves, some of who are in prison still and some of who are out, and their families including their kids, spouses, and caretakers for

their children while they are in prison.

I just came back yesterday from my second set of interviews with two female inmates who are in drug rehabilitation at The DC Correctional Treatment Facility. Both have been in and out of jail several times. They are remarkable interviews. These women are exposing me to aspects of development in my country that I realized I needed to see. I have spent so much time traipsing around the poor barrios of Latin America. However, I realize I know so little about development in my own country.

So now for the first time, at the tender age of 50, I am going to DC prisons. That's a whole new experience. I'm tempted to get involved in prison reform I'm so upset with some of the things I'm seeing. Social justice is definitely the direction I'm going in. I will be starting next week going into communities in inner city Washington area that I never would have gone into except driving through in my car. For me it's proving to be a tremendous growth experience.

The key highlight of my post USAID life, and one which I have left for last, is a study that I did last year in Peru focusing on the impacts of a fascinating Human Rights Education Program.

As I said earlier, my husband went as Mission Director to Lima in January of '97. I was supposed to join him in June and, while there, I was planning to work with the rich civil society and, in so doing, begin to apply my emerging skills as an aspiring applied cultural anthropologist. My hope, while in Peru, was to learn about Peru's rich cultural history and, among others, do research in the area of social capital.

On April 26, entirely unexpectedly, two weeks before my older daughter's graduation from college and six weeks before my younger daughter's graduation from high school, my husband, Eric Zallman, dropped dead of heart failure in Lima. Needless to say, it was an enormous shock and an event that has transformed my life.

Four months after he died I decided to go back to Peru to give a presentation on evaluation of civic education programs at a large conference being held in Lima. I had visited Peru for a week in February, not long after Eric arrived, and as a result of the trip I was left intrigued with Peru's active civil society.

During my August trip I approached one of the NGOs I was most impressed with during my trip to Lima in February and volunteered my services to do a case study of one of their programs in human rights education. I had three motivations: one was to learn about this program, as I was left intrigued with what I had heard about it in my February visit. The second was to try out a methodology for assessing impact that I've always wanted to do (the work with Georgetown Law School was a sequel to this study). The third was to disseminate this program internationally as I remain deeply committed to disseminating good practices in development.

The group, the Peruvian Institute for Education in Human Rights and Peace (IPEDEHP), was delighted to take me up on my offer. They found funds to cover my travel to and from Peru, while in Peru and my living

expenses, ironically enough from USAID in Lima. And I embarked on what was been the most significant experience of my life.

Thus far I've put in at least eight months of my life into doing the field work, writing up the study, and disseminating it. I have done everything that I wanted to do in CDIE and more in terms of outreach and dissemination but applying it from the outside. I spent time identifying the audiences up front and getting their buy in to the design of the study. After collecting the data and preparing a draft, I shared it with these audiences for their critique. And, I am about to send out over 1,500 copies of the report in English and Spanish worldwide. I have already done about 20 briefings — to USAID, universities, and NGOs — and have others (with the World Bank and the UNDP, among others, lined up). My objective is to disseminate good practices so that others can learn from them, and the IPEDEHP case happens to be an excellent opportunity to do precisely this.

As it turns out, I found very significant impacts, and the program that I focused on that involves training community leaders from throughout Peru in human rights, democracy and citizen participation is an extraordinary program. Already the human rights education community in the U.S. is fascinated; they want to translate the IPEDEHP materials into English so that they can be adapted for use here in the U.S. I also plan, as private citizen Bernbaum, to send the report to members of the U.S. Congress, the Department of State, and the National Security Counsel as an example of how a limited amount of foreign aide can go a long way in promoting U.S. foreign policy objectives to promote human rights and democracy overseas.

Q: Can you sum up what you thought were the critical points?

BERNBAUM: One key point is that a program such as this that by deliberately empowering people by getting at core values — dignity, respect, equality — one can engender tremendous commitment. Two years after receiving training from IPEDEHP a number of the community leaders were still actively promoting human rights in their communities. Another is that, in a society such as Peru that is emerging from conflict, reconnecting people with submerged values, encouraging them to speak of some of the traumas they have experienced as part of the training, and then giving them the tools after the training to help them defend their rights and those of others can have a strong therapeutic effect. The impacts, in terms of increases in self-esteem, including for some women a transformational experience, reductions in family violence, are impressive.

Q: How do you promote human rights?

BERNBAUM: How do you promote human rights? People need to realize, first of all, they are worthy of dignity and respect. They also need to know what their rights are. What does Universal Declaration of Human Rights have to say? What does their own constitution have to say about their right? Then, once they know what their rights are, they need to know how to go about defending these rights. Having practical tools that they can use once back in their communities — in terms of interactive methodologies and easy to use materials — is also important. IPEDEHP provides a very sophisticated conceptual framework translated

into materials and a methodology that is easy to apply.

The title of the study is "Weaving Ties of Friendship, Trust and Commitment to Build Human Rights and Democracy in Peru". What IPEDEHP is doing so brilliantly, which is just good development, is building networks of people to trust each other and to work together to achieve a common end. It's a wonderful example of reform from the bottom up.

I'm going to just deviate with one last comment. I believe there are individuals who are organized formally, and informally in groups who are truly dedicated to promoting development be it two blocks from here in Washington in the inner city, in Latin America, Asia or Africa. Many of them are very effective in what they are doing. And yet these groups are so busy doing with what they are doing that they often don't have time to document what they are doing, assess the impact of their efforts, and share their experiences and lessons learned with others. I feel that my skill and my ability is in helping to tell these stories. I have the evaluation skills, I am as a result of the IPEDEHP case study perfecting some valuable approaches for assessing impact, and I remain committed to dissemination.

Over the last year I have published three case studies for international dissemination — this one, one focusing on a Girls Education Program in Malawi, and the study I did in the Dominican Republic on businessmen, who are playing an important role in influencing educational reform.

I am in my element. I am very satisfied. I am living my values. I feel I am playing an important role in development. Ironically enough, I think I'm having a lot more impact on USAID now from the outside than I ever did within.

Among others, three weeks after Eric died, I met one on one with the Administrator, Brian Atwood, for an hour and a half in his office. We had lunch together, the two of us. I gave him feedback on his agency, both positive and constructive. He took it very well. I shared with him my concerns on reengineering, my concerns on the strategic framework, on what was happening with CDIE. I also talked about some of the work I've since leaving USAID focusing on programs that the Agency should be proud of — its work in Africa in the area of basic education and its work strengthening civil society in the Dominican Republic.

Brian took this feedback very well. To my surprise, he was so pleased that he invited me to play a role in helping to design his senior management retreat a month later.

I just had an information exchange with him a couple of weeks ago where I sent him these two studies that I just referred to, and congratulated him on his pending nomination as U.S. Ambassador to Brazil. I highlighted the Peru case study because it symbolized my connection with Peru and Eric.

He got my package and my letter. Two days after receiving it he sat down and he wrote me a handwritten two page letter thanking me for the study, commenting on how well I seemed to be doing after my husband's death which came seven months after the RIF, and exhorting me to continue to spread far and wide the good

word on what USAID is doing to promote civil society and democracy because there are skeptics out there.

And I'm happy to do precisely this. I'm happy to promote good practices in development be it from USAID or any other agency. I just find myself very, very sad — and we'll get into this in a moment — to see what is happening to this agency and our Foreign Aid program because there is so much that used to be and still is good about it.

Concluding observations on foreign assistance

Q: Well, let's proceed on taking a step back and reflecting on your rich experience with Foreign Assistance, and AID and where you come out on all this?

BERNBAUM: First of all, I'd like to express my appreciation for being given the opportunity to do this oral interview. Preparing for the oral interview has been an extraordinary experience. It has permitted me to stop and look back at my experiences over the years, obviously be humbled at what I don't know, look at the trends in my career and the Agency, at least as I perceive them. For me it's a nice way to, shall we say, reach closure on a career that I began not out of my own choice, but to follow my husband; a career that picked up momentum and then ended in a not so happy fashion.

I'd like to divide these comments into four categories and then of course, you'll come in and out with your questions. The first is my own personal reflections. The second is reflections on USAID internal operations and management. The third is reflections on USAID's role as an instrument of foreign policy and development, and finally the fourth how to do it right and lessons learned.

Personal Reflections

Let me start with personal reflections. Overall, especially in my middle years in AID, I would say that the career in AID was very satisfying. I and my husband were cared for by the system. My career mobility was taken care of. For the first 10 to 12 years or so I never had to worry about my next assignments. I had the privilege of having wonderful mentors who to this day continue to be mentors. I still go back to all of them for advice.

For myself and many of us in USAID, when we think of USAID we think of "family" and friendships. Those friendships and family have been critical to me since the RIF and especially since my husband's death. Many USAID people, like yourself and others, have reached out to me.

I don't think I would be where I am today if I didn't have the USAID family and friends plus others. I was given tremendous learning opportunities in USAID. There was never a dull moment. I was exposed to fascinating countries, people, situations. I also received some good training. It was an extraordinarily enriching experience, and I think if I look at what I'm doing now outside of AID which is giving me tremendous satisfaction, a lot of it is thanks to the prior "preparation" I had during my career in USAID.

I feel very proud of some the work I did — my work in Honduras with CADERH and GEMAH where I believe I had a small impact on policy and practice in the area of management and vocational skills training. I am also very proud of the work I did in management and to promote career enhancement with my staff in Kenya. Even through the Incentives project floundered, it was a wonderful experience, and I know we made what would have been a wonderful contribution to the Agency. I'm very pleased with a lot of the things I did while at CDIE. I'm pleased with the work I did with donors while in Caribbean Affairs.

On the other hand I'm frustrated. I've been frustrated since I joined USAID that I've always had to contract to others what I wanted to do myself. I'm now doing a lot of those things I used to contract to others, and it gives me tremendous personal satisfaction.

I'm very distressed with the increased politicization of the program. I understand that USAID is an instrument of foreign policy. This increasing politicization, and especially the Congressional earmarks have, in my opinion, deeply hurt the Agency in so many ways. I'm disturbed with what I see as increased bureaucratization of the system, even through there are some who would argue that, with reengineering, bureaucratization has been reduced. Maybe the bureaucratization has always been there, but I'm seeing it in different ways.

Q: What do you mean by that?

BERNBAUM: The emphasis on accountability, at least in recent years, with results reporting which has tied a lot of people up in knots accompanied by a lot of paperwork, bean counting and with a lot less time being given to implementation. Now that I'm seeing USAID from the outside, it seems that the paperwork is endless. It also disturbs me to see my former colleagues tied up. I'm frustrated with the pressure to move us technical folk up and, in so doing, forcing us to leave behind our technical roles as we move into senior management. I realize that is not a problem that is particular to USAID. I am a technical person. I always will be a technical person. I didn't operate well in a higher level managerial, political position and yet that is the way I was being pushed as I was identified as having "senior management" potential. I permitted myself to go with the flow, both due to peer pressure and the fact that this was "expected" and to my fear of being pushed out.

Q: What did you think? What is the dilemma? Has this been a constant issue?

BERNBAUM: Yes

Q: But not necessarily...Some have the skills and some don't. So how do you preserve the technical without making people become managers?

BERNBAUM: One way you do it is to have a constant stream of interns coming in. When I came into the agency 21 years ago, USAID was bringing in 100 interns a year, 50 every fall, 50 every spring, come hell or high water. But that is no longer the case. There were years when we didn't have any interns coming in

at all. Then we would have a batch come in and then the spigot would again be turned off. So what you have now is an aging agency where the average age is 48 or 49.

I also think the agency has to find ways to reward senior technical people. Marcia Bernbaum, has skills in evaluation and outreach, which are important to the Agency. Rather than getting RIFed, since she left a protected senior management position to move into a technical position, she should have somehow been rewarded, and certainly not RIFed. In RIFing me and 5 other senior education officers the Agency lost a large part of its expertise in education; ironic since several months later the Administrator, for political reasons, elevated education to an Agency goal but with minimal staff to carry out this goal.

Q: You talked several times about “in the mainstream” and “not being in the mainstream” which seemed to suggest that certain areas are not considered important areas to work in?

BERNBAUM: If you are Foreign Service officer in AID to this day, your career mobility, be it as a technical person or not, resides in your being pretty much in a regional bureau. They tried to upgrade the prestige of the central bureaus and local bureaus but going into the management/personnel side is doom for Foreign Service Officer. The same holds, to a certain extent, for Foreign Service officers going to the Global bureau. The people who are on the promotion panels, the people who help you move up into senior positions are often in the field or in the regional bureaus.

Q: Do you think that the “sideline” experience is detrimental in terms of building a capacity to take on more senior roles?

BERNBAUM: Yes.

Q: Why does the system downgrade that type of experience?

BERNBAUM: I find it mystifying. I met with the head of personnel, who is a dear friend. We had served together in Panama in the late 1970s. I met with him when my husband was getting ready to go to Peru, because I was trying to figure out if I decided to take a lower level job in Peru, would I still keep my options open as a Mission Director? While I never really wanted to be a Mission Director, I didn't want to close off the options. I remember him saying to me one day, at the time I was in CDIE, “Marcy, you blew it. You've gone out of the mainstream twice, first to the Training Division and now to CDIE. People are going to say you are not serious about moving into senior management.”

I said, “And yet Frank I was performing an important function for the Agency in both instance. In the Office of Personnel I was putting in place a policy and a set of systems for promoting career enhancement. At CDIE I was playing an important role in making evaluation more relevant to the needs of Agency employees...”

Q: That sounds like more of a prejudiced view rather than one with substantive merit.

BERNBAUM: Yes, absolutely. When this individual had to sign my RIF letter — and he signed it with great regret; he called me at home practically in tears to apologize for RIFing me because I was seen as a very qualified person — I said, “Frank, isn’t that an irony. So this is the way that I was rewarded. In the brief time I have been at CDIE the impact of what I am doing is being widely recognized, even by the Administrator, and yet my reward it to be RIFed.”

He shrugged and said, “You’re right.”

Q: Do you think there is any substantive merit in the perspective that not being mainline doesn’t prepare people?

BERNBAUM: No, absolutely not. I think that the experiences I had “out of the mainstream” were invaluable. You become a Mission Director and you have to deal with personnel issues. You have to deal with training issues. You also have to deal with evaluations. I think everybody should be obligated and rewarded for spending time in all areas of the agency, just like the interns are supposed to rotate. As a good senior manager you need to have a sense of how to do programmatic evaluations and strategic planning. No, I think it’s just the opposite.

Q: Do you have some more reflections on this?

BERNBAUM: No. I’m finished on personal reflections.

Reflections on AID’s internal operations and management

I’d now like to reflect on USAID internal operations and management. Here I suffer from having an image of only a 20 year time span. And I realize that there’s always the tendency to talk about the good old days. I’m sure that if somebody were doing this oral history 20 years ago, talking about when I came into the Agency, they would also be talking about the good old days.

Anyway, reflections on USAID internal operations management. As I said earlier, I feel that USAID is a “family.” A family that overtime has become increasingly disjointed and dysfunctional. I see, and again I might not be seeing it correctly, less and less time and interest being spent on mentoring and career enhancement. I see fewer opportunities for substantive training opportunities such as DSB. I see what would appear, at least based on my experience, to be an erosion in the values structure of the agency. I think many of us who joined AID came in to do development. Many were former Peace Corps volunteers who deeply believed in development and in certain core values, such as respect for the dignity of mankind.

I see the people in the Agency, increasingly, operating counter to these agreed values, in large part due to the increasing politicization of the Agency. I would like to use reengineering as an example. Reengineering set out some very key values for the Agency. These values were espoused by the Assistant Administrator for Management and by the Administrator. Yet those very values, that formed the core of reengineering, were

constantly undercut by the actions of these two people, knowingly or unknowingly. I brought that to Brian Atwood's attention before I left the Agency.

Q: What do you mean they were undercut?

BERNBAUM: We were asked to operate counter to those values. We valued teamwork. We valued consultation with our host country counterparts. We valued results, but a lot of this emphasis on teamwork, on consulting with customers, the focus on results was undercut by the very way our system operated.

Q: Pressure to produce results? That sort of thing?

BERNBAUM: I think senior management didn't really adhere to the values. I'm an avid reader of the management literature. I believe that the most effective agencies and managers are those where the leadership walks its talk. Reengineering reaffirmed a number of values that many of us managers really deeply believe in. However, they weren't really understood or bought into at the senior levels. Witness the fact that the Assistant Administrators were career political appointees. They were never asked to go through any reengineering training. They were never told that they had to exemplify these values of honesty, integrity, and teamwork. How can you expect people underneath to give credibility to these values? Then you've got the political exigencies that force you to do things that often go against the grain of why many of us joined the Agency.

As a psychologist I would venture to say that the agency has come close to putting itself in a situation of corporate schizophrenia where it asks people to do something and then often, not consciously, forces them to operate differently. I see a lot of very distressed people with very low morale currently in AID. Part of the problem is a lack of resources. But part is that people are often asked to operate counter to their values. That certainly happened to me when I was the Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs and I had to deal with Haiti. All I can say is, I no longer belong in an agency that doesn't meet my values.

Q: When you talked about politicization, what did you mean?

BERNBAUM: When I entered the Agency, there were very few earmarks. There was, as I recall, a set aside for the AFL-CIO, at least in the Latin American region. But that began to change. In the case of the Latin America region, the Kissinger Commission marked the move toward big time earmarks. They are no longer called earmarks but it's the same thing. And the Agency in many sectors has extremely little flexibility to operate outside of these "mandates." Sometimes the earmarks or mandates aren't all bad. Congress says, "Oh, my goodness, you've got to do more in basic education in Africa so do it." Then you get into earmarks like the Georgetown University one that I referred to where that money goes to a specific contractor or university which may or may not have the ability to do what is required or where there really isn't a need. This is not reflective just of AID. It's characteristics of the overall government structure. I am distressed as a taxpaying citizen at the tolerance for "pork."

Q: You are talking more about a Congressional politicization...?

BERNBAUM: Congressional pressures. I think the politicization of the agency comes certainly from a desire on the part of Congress to micro-manage the Agency. But the pressures don't just come from Congress. They also come from the Executive. The National Security Council has become increasingly politicized. In the case of Haiti, for example, someone on the NSC has a wonderful idea of something that he thinks should be done in Haiti which may or may not coincide with what the needs are. Nobody dares counteract him, especially if he is a "heavy weight."

Maybe that's the way it's been since time memorial. Maybe it's because in my younger years in AID I was a lower level plebe in the agency doing development and I didn't have to be exposed to this kind of thing. In Latin America and particularly Central America, our program has become very politicized. It has never recovered from the Kissinger Commission era.

Q: The impression you leave is that this politicization process and the political security interest of the U.S. undermine the development objective.

BERNBAUM: I think in many cases, yes. I'm not going to say that this is true across the board, because there are many cases where AID is still doing excellent work.

Q: Or do you think they could be complementary and mutually reinforcing?

BERNBAUM: They should be. In many areas, they should be. The human rights education case study I did provides an excellent example. AID is supporting human rights, democracy and citizen participation in Peru. Peru's marginalized populations are being empowered. At the same time, this meets our foreign policy objectives. We're not throwing money at the problem. We're putting a small amount of money, and we are achieving results, both developmentally and politically. It can happen.

We're now getting into stereotypes: USAID focusing on long term development and institution building and State Department, the Executive, and Congress wants instant results.

Sadly, my former family is disjointed and dysfunctional. People are overworked, over stressed. They have less time to focus on people skills. Everybody is being asked to do too much with too little resources and not being given the appropriate incentives and rewards. I see, especially in Washington, but increasingly as I go out to field missions, a reduction in morale, people being asked to do more with less, people being asked to contract out more and more as the Agency has less and less technical ability. I think it's just a matter of time until AID gets folded into the State Department.

Q: Do you think that is somewhat influenced by the fact that we've moved into a different world scene since the Cold War days, and that this may be not just an internal matter but being influenced by the different world environment we're living in?

BERNBAUM: Oh yes. Clearly. You have a different world environment. You have a different Congress. Yes. It's certainly not a simple thing. What I find mystifying is if you ask your average U.S. citizen whether we should be providing assistance overseas, as some surveys have shown, people do agree. Who's going to object to providing health and education services to people overseas and small business? And yet, the Administration and Congress keep cutting funding for foreign aid as a percentage of GDP and the government budget.

I do give credit to the current USAID administration for attempting to work on this to get out an image of what foreign development is and how much money is going into development. As you know, a survey conducted a few years ago showed that people thought we were putting much too much money into foreign aid but when they were asked how much money they thought we were putting in, they said five to fifteen percent of our budget rather than point one percent of our budget which is what is actually going into foreign aid.

Another reflection. You have Congress. You've got the Government Performance and Results Act which has driven the strategic framework, which is in part healthy and in part produced problems. You have as AID's own internal penchant for increasingly tying itself in bureaucratic and administrative knots.

Let's take reengineering. We have lost the blueprint. AID no longer has the Holiday Inn predictability. It's a confusing system where every Mission can operate as it wants. We have increasing pressure to focus on accounting controls. I'm not against this, but it almost seems like these pressures are becoming a driving force. Maybe what I'm reflecting is the perspective of someone who is jade, who was stationed here in Washington for a number of years prior to retirement. Were I retiring from the field, I may be seeing things differently.

I've seen a very clear erosion, certainly in the education sector, in AID's technical capability both in Washington and the field. When I and my husband joined the agency we said, "Oh, this will work out well. Every country in Latin America has at least two or three project development officers and one or two education officers so we'll have no problem finding positions in the same post."

Well, I think there's now one education officer in all of Latin America. I can count on the fingers of one hand the seasoned education officers left in the agency. We have undercut our ability to operate in this area. Our strength as an Agency has been our presence in the field — our technical capability, our ability to sit at the policy table, to dialogue, to be there to help nurture and help move things along. We're losing that. We're now contracting that out. And there are some good people on the outside that can do this work as contractors. I'm happy to do this for AID, but I think, "what a shame." Why should I as a contractor be preparing the strategic framework for basic education in Africa which becomes the agency's internal modus operandi? I just don't think that's right.

With this reduction in technical capability we also have reduced the ability to provide technical guidance to our contractors and NGOs. Even the contractors and NGOs out there are having a hard time working

because the people in the agency don't really understand education. They are often being asked to do things that don't make sense. That's surprising to me on the outside to see the power that the mid-level AID officer has to decide on how hundreds of thousands of tax payers dollars will be used.

Deeply distressing to me in education is our reduced capacity to play a substantive role in policy dialogue. AID in Africa, for example, has over the past years played an important role in the area of policy dialogue. Influencing policy reform in education in Latin America has also become very important. If its so important, than we should have the in-house capability to take a seat at the policy table. It's sad to see us undercut what has traditionally been our strength — our technical presence in the field.

I'm also concerned about the Agency's internal operations. In spite of the creation of CDIE and many, many good attempts on the part of many people — yourself, John Ericksson, so many others — it's unfortunate to see that the agency is not benefitting from the lessons learned from the past experience. It's also unfortunate to see CDIE bobbing up and down in terms of it's expertise and ability to play a leadership role in the agency. CDIE has such an important role to play. Those are my reflections on internal operations. Shall we move on?

Q: Yes.

Reflections on AID's role as an instrument of foreign policy and development

BERNBAUM: I'd now like to move into our role as an instrument of foreign policy and development. In prior years — and this is where you have a much better focus than I do — we were seen as a unique agency. When I joined USAID in the '70s at least in the area of the world I worked in, Latin America, AID was the technical leader in education. We certainly were the innovator. The World Bank and IDB did classroom construction and bought vehicles. We were the ones that were out training of teachers, developing textbooks, putting in place management information systems. If your go back to the Servicio period, AID was responsible in Latin America for establishing a number of Ministries.

I see an erosion in what is AID's competitive advantage, it's ability to take the risk to try new things. Times have changed. The World Bank is now doing a lot of these things in education and that's fine. I asked a senior World Bank official in education what he felt the competitive advantage of AID was. He said, "You still are a grantee as opposed to a lending agency. You have the ability and the flexibility to experiment, to try new things, to be the innovators. You have the in country presence that we don't. You provide the laboratory that makes it possible to develop models and approaches that we then pick up on and expand."

I wish I could still say that. I look at Central America where AID has been consistently involved for so many years in education consistently — El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala. And yet we are easing out of education. We are turning a lot of these functions over to the World Bank, in part because we have no choice. We don't have the technical expertise. We don't have the funds.

Q: Where do you see other areas in your experience where AID has played this innovation role as sort of a pioneer?

BERNBAUM: Well, certainly in population and health. I'm not up to date but AID has been, I suspect is still, the leader in population. They have done a lot of highly innovative work in child survival and HIV/AIDS. I wouldn't say AID has been a leader, but in the last 10 to 15 years, AID has supported some very creative initiatives in the areas of civil society and democracy. Certainly elections monitoring is an area where AID has been very effective. There has, with AID funds, been a lot of work put into helping to build internal elections monitoring capabilities.

I was just at the National Democratic Institute last week. I'm going to do a presentation on the methodology that I used in carrying out the IPEDEHP case study at NDI next week. NDI has been supporting the creation of civic forums in Eastern Europe, picking up on initiatives of such organizations as the Kettering Foundation in the United States. The United States is known throughout the world for its volunteerism, for its ability to get civil society together to lobby, to push for reforms at the local level and at the national level. So NDI has picked up on this vast experience and I'm using NDI as an example. I can't vouch for how effective they have been, but the initiative is a valuable one. It is in areas such as these where we in the United States have both the traditions and technical expertise.

I can't speak for agriculture, because it's an area where I have had minimal involvement. However, I know that in past years we've played a very major role in agricultural development overseas.

USAID has also played a valuable role in business development, in supporting economic stabilization and structural adjustments. We have, in the latter two areas, been partners with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. I think of the work that my husband did in Peru in getting export zones started.

In term of USAID's role as an instrument of foreign policy, I see an erosion as well in funding and the independence of our operation as AID increasingly becomes a tool of Congress, the National Security Council, other vested interests. Education is a good example. In my opinion, we are losing our credibility.

Q: Is that because of a lack of interest in the agency and the priority given to it? Do we still have a lot to offer...in a changing world?

BERNBAUM: Yes. I think the beauty of AID's flexibility through its grant funded technical assistance is that we don't just bring in American technical assistance, we bring in qualified people from other countries. And, of course, we draw in qualified people from the countries we are working in. Some of the outstanding work we've done in Guatemala with curriculum reform, for example, is thanks to Colombian technical expertise.

Q: That's part of the change. As these other countries have developed, we're not so unique in that respect.

BERNBAUM: That's true. I'm one of those people who continues to believe that AID's comparative advantage has been its technical expertise, its field presence, its presumed long range ability, and the fact that it's a grantee so it has more flexibility. AID's comparative advantage has been in long term institutional strengthening.

Q: What do you mean by that?

BERNBAUM: Through the Servicios in the 1960s we helped establish, at least in Latin America, Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and other ministries. We have, in education, helped to establish management information systems, we have assisted in strengthening local electoral systems, we have had the flexibility in institutional strengthening to work both with governments and NGOs.

I see us losing our capability to be an effective actor in doing this because of our reductions in operating expenses, overseas presence and the political pressures to get things done very quickly. That's a broad reaching statement. It doesn't mean that USAID is not doing some excellent institution building now, but it's harder to do. In the sector that I'm most familiar with, human resources development, I have seen results.

If we are to stop and look at where has AID had the most significant impact over time, I would venture to say it's in the thousands and thousands of participants AID has financed to the United States for training who have returned to their countries to assume key leadership positions in the public, private and civil sectors. Many Presidents, Cabinet Ministers, and business and civil society leaders have been AID participants.

Q: How do you measure the impact of that?

BERNBAUM: Interesting you should ask. I don't think you measure impact by counting widgets. It's not enough to know who went and what they studied. What is most important is tracking what they did when they return to their countries and to what extent their U.S. experience has influenced their careers, family life, what they do on a volunteer basis in their communities.

However, this requires putting in the time and effort and money to track people as individuals and not as statistics. What happened to the individual's career trajectory? Did he/she get promoted? Did he/she move up through the bureaucracy? What happened in terms of what he/she did within the community? Did the returnee, outside of his/her work, create local volunteer organizations? Each participant is an individual and what he/she did with the U.S. training will differ according to that individual's skills and interests and the environment he/she returns to. Tracking impacts, not unlike what I did with the IPEDEHP case study, can be done and has been done. However, it requires a flexible methodology that permits the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

One of problems I had when we were doing the strategic framework and our results reporting to the Hill was that, in the strategic framework process, we lost a category for tracking participants. Instead participants

trained became subsumed under each of the strategic objectives, depending on the area they were trained in and, in the process, participant training got “lost.”

I am not, therefore, surprised to find that the number of participants we are sending to the U.S. has plummeted in recent years: the indicators tracking system does not “reward” supporting participant training for its own sake.

Anything else?

Q: No. That’s fine.

Reflections on how to do it “right”

BERNBAUM: Okay. So I’m going to end up with my reflections and how to do it right. I could go on and on but I’ll keep it short.

I believe, based on my experience, that a lot has to do with being in the right place at the right time with the right resources. The GEMAH experience with business managers in Honduras in the early ‘80s provides a good example. Had we gone in to help GEMAH a year before or a year afterwards we may not have had the same impact. What we did, just at the point that they were looking for help, was to link GEMAH with the American Management Associations. We gave them a boost that they needed, a small amount of money and technical expertise and — within three years — they were financially self-sufficient and no longer needed our help.

I look at the IPEDEHP case of the study that I just did. Again we came in at just the right time. We are help an existing, indigenous NGO doing excellent work in human rights and democracy to extend its work with teachers to community leaders. Somebody in AID/Peru had the good sense to propose that IPEDEHP link up with the newly created Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, a state entity created to assure that government institutions respected the rights of the Peruvian citizens. AID “nudged” the linkage, again provided a small amount of funding, and then let IPEDEHP go with it. As with the GEMAH program it has helped for AID to have an in country presence. Being there are the right time...

Q: How do you know what the right time is?

BERNBAUM: Judgment. Judgment and the ability to take risks.

Q: There must be some characteristics that make the conditions more favorable?

BERNBAUM: Yes. Good project managers in the field who have excellent judgment and the ability to go out and see programs and ask the right questions. I wish I had a formula but I don’t.

Q: And how do you know if the time is right or not right?

BERNBAUM: Part is the Agency memory. In the case of GEMAH, AID has a long history of supporting institutions of this type. So, let's start by going back through CDIE's memory base and examining, over time, what the Agency has done to support both establishing and strengthening management training institutions. But to do this one needs a project officer in the field who is inquisitive, creative, who knows that there is a service in AID/Washington, in this case CDIE, that has this capability. One also needs a project officer who will take the time to go out and visit the program, a project officer who starts by asking, "How can we help you? What do you see as your strengths and your areas of need?"

I don't think you can get around it. It's individuals who have the smarts and the backstop help that they need.

A second ingredient for doing it "right": I think it's important to provide the time and continuity needed to stay in there for the long haul. You don't reform education systems overnight. You're not going to make a dent in basic education or primary education unless you're there for at least 10 or 20 years. You can't just come in and think with a three year program that you are going to "do" it in an area as complex as basic education (GEMAH is different). Where we've stayed in with the long haul and we've been patient and we've gone through the ups and downs and have been willing to move out when necessary, and back in when necessary I think we can see some fruits. I can certainly say that in the case of support for basic education in El Salvador and Honduras.

A third ingredient: you can't force from the outside what people don't want to do from the inside. To help a Rafael Pineda Ponce achieve his vision, to take these young budding managers from GEMAH and help them accomplish what they want to do, to help the IPEDEHP people in Peru who, like Pineda Ponce, already have a clear vision of what they want to accomplish and help them accomplish their visions is what is going to "stick" over the long run.

You've got to respect in-country expertise, where possible help people implement their visions, and make sure there is continuity. You have to operate under the assumption that even in the poor countries we are working in there are very talented, capable people. Identifying them and their institutions, respecting them and giving them the resources (including technical expertise) to do what they want to do is what will eventually pay off. It's important if we really want to have an impact on institution building.

A fourth ingredient to doing it "right" is having the ability to provide hands on involvement. I use here the example of the Dominican Republic. In the Dominican Republic the USAID Mission played a fundamental role in helping to ensure a successful Presidential election in 1996 after 40 years of fraudulent elections. A lot of the credit goes to the then Mission Director, Marilyn Zak. She had an excellent relationship with the Ambassador and the political officer at the Embassy. In a very low key fashion, but very much as a partner, she invited key Dominican leaders to her house. In so doing she established an environment that encouraged behind the scenes brainstorming that eventually led to the Dominicans themselves deciding to take some decisive actions to assure a free and fair election in 1996.

There's no substitute, especially in an area as delicate as democratic development, for having hands on ability. It's very tricky, volatile stuff. You've got to be there. You've got to be sensitive. You can be an actor and nudge. It's not enough to leave all of this to a contractor.

A fifth ingredient: which is sort of an obvious one is you've got to be flexible, be able to adapt to the changing times. Yes, we had the cold war, we no longer have the cold war. We start a program in a country, we have a new Minister of Education that comes in. You've got to be able to adapt to change.

I just evaluated a program in Africa where we didn't adapt to changing times. We continued to impose policy conditionality that no longer made sense. That was supposedly a positive thing about reengineering. It was supposed to give the Agency more flexibility to change policy conditionality when needed, but I'm not sure this is happening.

A sixth ingredient: by all means we should focus on results. As an evaluator, I'm a strong believer in results, but don't let the results drive the programming. I think the strategic framework is beginning to do that because it's not flexibly looking at what makes sense.

Q: How do we avoid that?

BERNBAUM: Keep your eyes peeled. Be ready to adjust the country strategic plan when country conditions change. You have to respect the fact that if we operate under the assumption we respect the countries we are working in, and that we appreciate that they are different cultures and traditions, we have to be ready for the diversity.

This also means flexibility in our data collection methodologies. I think there are ways of reporting under the Government Performance and Results Act that can permit us in some ways to summarize data but also to show this diversity. It's not easy.

Q: The results, because this is a programming instrument, then gets converted over time to a justification and defense instrument to demonstrate that you are accomplishing things therefore you are forced to use it as a justification...

BERNBAUM: Then it becomes, as I said, a situation in which the results indicators are driving the programming and that, for me, is dangerous.

In the case of IPEDEHP, I believe that the methodology I used to carry out the case study permitted this flexibility. I was able to identify some very impressive results in terms of impacts that make both IPEDEHP and AID, as the prime funder look very good. The methodology, which combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies and which permitted me to follow trails, made it possible to identify some unanticipated impacts that would never had been detected had traditional "results" oriented data collection methodologies have been used. Thus, both IPEDEHP and AID were able to take place for some important results that might

not otherwise have been identified.

A seventh ingredient: big is not necessarily better. Some of the most effective AID investments that I have seen over my career in AID have been smaller investments, targeted at good programs or designed to support groups of individuals who were headed in the right direction.

There are times when you need to put lots of money into programs, but I think we have run into a habit, especially when we are under political pressure such as was the case in El Salvador in the 1980s, to throw money at problems. I've seen it too many times. This deeply distresses me as a taxpaying citizen. Again, I go back to IPEDEHP and GEMAH, two small programs, where not a lot of money was put in but the funding was built around people who had the drive and ambition and knew what they were doing.

Q: What some people say about smaller programs and NGO programs is they are all very nice, but they are very microscopic and, thus, they have no broad impact.

BERNBAUM: It's true in some cases.

Q: You can't replicate them. It's too difficult to replicate them.

BERNBAUM: I ask you to read the IPEDEHP case study, if you want a good example of a replicable program. However, you are not wrong in many cases about the challenges of replicability. I guess the message I'm trying to make is beware of throwing money at problems with the expectations there will be results forthcoming. We threw money at Haiti, and there was serious disillusionment when poor Haiti couldn't absorb all that funding. You have a high chance of high visible failure. When the money is thrown at institutions that don't want it or can't absorb it or they have to accept it with strings attached, there is a good chance that the effort will be hard pressed to become institutionalization afterwards.

An eighth ingredient: consider carefully the appropriate role of technical assistance. AID has the capability to provide some excellent technical assistance. However, choose it wisely. If there is capability in country make use of that expertise rather than bring in "high price" consultants from the outside to do what host country people can do. Indeed, among your qualified people in-country that you can contract for technical advice are the very participants that AID sent in prior years to the U.S. for training!

A ninth ingredient: there is a need for constant learning and reflection. Any good institution that's worth it's salt that continues to thrive and survive in a changing world is constantly learning from its experiences and changes. I can't criticize AID for replacing the project paper with the results framework. I don't like the fact that they got rid of the logical framework but again. But certainly there is a need for constant learning and reflection, and this is where CDIE's memory base comes in so handy.

The last ingredient which is sort of obvious given my orientation is that we've got to find ways to be clear on what our developmental and political objectives are. Often they are go together very nicely. IPEDEHP is

a nice example, but sometimes these objectives to diverge. Permit them to diverge and don't try to do development when what you really have is a political imperative. We did have a time when we had Economic Support Funds that funneled assistance to meet political imperatives and developmental assistance to do development. Those distinctions, however, no longer really exist.

Q: That's excellent. That's terrific. Let me just ask you; I think it's kind of obvious from what you've been saying but do you think over the 20 years or so that you've been with the service, has there been a really fundamental impact of the AID program on the development of these countries that we've been working with?

BERNBAUM: I think so.

Q: Has it made a difference?

BERNBAUM: If you look at the region I know best, and use Honduras as an example, I think one can show that the U.S. Government through USAID has made definite impacts in the health sector, the education sector, working with small business and in exports.

Q: They are all wiped out.

BERNBAUM: To a certain extent you might be correct. You can't plan for hurricanes. But I wouldn't go so far as to say that all of the gains in Honduras have been wiped out by Hurricane Mitch.

There are other countries we could point to, such as Costa Rica, Chile and so on. Yes. I think AID has made an impact. Now has AID made as much of an impact as it could have? That's a good question. My fear is AID's continued ability to have an impact under it's current circumstances which are just very, very difficult.

Q: I think that's a good place to end. That's an excellent interview. Thank you very much.